THE

WORKS

OF

JAMES THOMSON.

WITH HIS LAST

CORRECTIONS and IMPROVEMENTS.

To which is prefixed,

An ACCOUNT of his LIFE and WRITINGS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
15
63
MAY

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SOPHONISBA.

A

TRAGEDY.

BRITISH MUSEUM
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MAY

TO THE

QUEEN.

MADAM,

THE notice your MAJESTY has condeſcended to take of the following *Tragedy*, emboldens me to lay it, in the humbleſt manner, at your MAJESTY's feet. And to whom can this illuſtrious *Carthaginian* ſo properly fly for protection, as to a QUEEN, who commands the hearts of a *people*, more powerful at ſea than *Carthage?* more flouriſhing in *commerce* than thoſe *firſt merchants?* more ſecure againſt conqueſt? and, under a *Monarchy*, more free than a *Commonwealth* itſelf?

DEDICATION.

I DARE not, nor indeed need I, here attempt a character where both the great and the amiable qualities ſhine forth in full perfection. All words are faint to ſpeak what is univerſally felt, and acknowledged, by a happy people. Permit me, therefore, only to ſubſcribe myſelf, with the trueſt zeal and veneration,

MADAM,

Your MAJESTY'S

Moſt humble,

Moſt dutiful,

And moſt devoted

Servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

PREFACE.

IT is not my intention, in this preface, to defend any faults that may be found in the following piece. I am afraid there are too many; but thoſe who are beſt able to diſcover, will be moſt ready to pardon them. They alone know how difficult an undertaking the writing of a tragedy is: and this is a firſt attempt.

I beg leave only to mention the reaſon that determined me to make choice of this ſubject. What pleaſed me particularly, tho' perhaps it will not be leaſt liable to objection with ordinary readers, was the great ſimplicity of the ſtory. It is one, regular, and uniform, not charged with a multiplicity of incidents, and yet affording ſeveral revolutions of fortune; by which the paſſions may be excited, varied, and driven to their full tumult of emotion.

This unity of deſign was always ſought after and admired by the antients: and the moſt eminent among the moderns, who underſtood their writings, have choſen to imitate them in this, from an entire conviction that the reaſon of it muſt hold good in all ages. And here allow me to tranſlate a paſſage from the celebrated Monſieur *Racine*, which contains all I have to ſay on this head.

" We muſt not fancy that this rule hath no other " foundation but the caprice of thoſe who made it. " Nothing can touch us in tragedy, but what is pro- " bable. And what probability is there, that, in one " day, ſhould happen a multitude of things, which " could ſcarce happen in ſeveral weeks? There are " ſome who think that this ſimplicity is a mark of " barrenneſs of invention. But they do not conſider, " that, on the contrary, invention conſiſts of making " ſomething out of nothing: and that this huddle of " incidents has always been the refuge of Poets, who " did not find in their genius either richneſs or force " enough to engage their ſpectators, for five acts to- " gether, by a ſimple action, ſupported by the violence " of paſſions, the beauty of ſentiments, and the no-

" bleneſs of expreſſion."—I would not be underſtood to mean that all theſe things are to be found in my performance: I only ſhew the reader what I aimed at, and how I would have pleaſed him, had it been in my power.

As to the character of *Sophoniſba*; in drawing it, I have confined myſelf to the truth of hiſtory. It were an affront to the age, to ſuppoſe ſuch a character out of nature; eſpecially in a country which has produced ſo many great examples of public ſpirit and heroic virtues, even in the ſofter ſex: and I had deſtroyed her character intirely, had I not marked it with that ſtrong love to her country, diſdain of ſervitude, and inborn averſion to the *Romans*, by which all hiſtorians have diſtinguiſhed her. Nor ought her marrying *Maſiniſſa*, while her former huſband was ſtill alive, to be reckoned a blemiſh in her character. For, by the laws both of *Rome* and *Carthage*, the captivity of the huſband diſſolved the marriage of courſe; as among us, impotence, or adultery; not to mention the reaſons of a moral and public nature, which I have put into her own mouth in the ſcene betwixt her and *Syphax*.

This is all I have to ſay of the play itſelf. But I cannot conclude without owning my obligations to thoſe concerned in the repreſentation. They have indeed done me more than juſtice. Whatever was deſigned as amiable and engaging in *Maſiniſſa*, ſhines out in Mr. *Wilks*'s action. Mrs. *Oldfield*, in the character of *Sophoniſba*, has excelled what, even in the fondneſs of an author, I could either wiſh or imagine. The grace, dignity, and happy variety of her action have been univerſally applauded, and are truly admirable.

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr. WILLIAMS.

WHEN Learning, after the long Gothic *night,*
Fair, o'er the weſtern world, renew'd its light,
With arts ariſing, Sophoniſba *roſe,*
The tragic muſe, returning, wept her woes.
With her th' Italian *ſcene firſt learn'd to glow;*
And the firſt tears for her were taught to flow.
Her charms the Gallic *muſes next inſpir'd:*
Corneille *himſelf ſaw, wonder'd, and was fir'd.*
What foreign theatres with pride have ſhewn,
Britain, *by juſter title, makes her own.*
When Freedom is the cauſe, 'tis hers to fight;
And hers, when Freedom is the theme, to write.
For this a Britiſh Author *bids again*
The heroine riſe, to grace the Britiſh *ſcene.*
Here, as in life, ſhe breathes her genuine flame:
She aſks what boſom has not felt the fame?
Aſks of the Britiſh Youth—*Is ſilence there?*
She dares to aſk it of the Britiſh Fair.
To night, our home-ſpun author would be true,
At once, to nature, hiſtory, and you.
Well-pleas'd to give our neighbours due applauſe,
He owns their learning, but diſdains their laws.
Not to his patient touch, or happy flame,
'Tis to his Britiſh *heart he truſts for fame.*
If France *excel him in one free-born thought,*
The man, as well as poet, is in fault.
Nature! *informer of the poet's art,*
Whoſe force alone can raiſe or melt the heart,
Thou art his guide; each paſſion, every line,
Whate'er he draws to pleaſe, muſt all be thine.
Be thou his judge: in every candid breaſt,
Thy ſilent whiſper is the ſacred teſt.

The

The PERSONS.

MASINISSA, King of Maſſylia,	Mr. Wilks.
SYPHAX, King of Maſaeſylia,	Mr. Mills.
NARVA, Friend to Maſiniſſa,	Mr. Roberts.
SCIPIO, the Roman General,	Mr. Williams.
LAELIUS, his Lieutenant,	Mr. Bridgwater.
SOPHONISBA,	Mrs. Oldfield.
PHOENISSA, her Friend,	Mrs. Roberts.

Meſſenger, Slave, Guards, and Attendants.

SCENE, The Palace of CIRTHA.

SOPHONISBA.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

Soph. THIS hour, *Phoeniſſa*, this important hour,
Or fixes me a queen, or from a throne
Throws *Sophoniſba* into *Roman* chains.
Deteſted thought! For now his utmoſt force
Collected, deſperate, diſtreſs'd, and ſore
From battles loſt; with all the rage of war,
Ill--fated *Syphax* his laſt effort makes.
But ſay, thou partner of my hopes and fears,
Phoeniſſa, ſay; while from the lofty tower,
Our ſtraining eyes the field of battle ſought,
Ah, thought you not that our *Numidian* troops
Gave up the bloody field, and ſcattering fled,
Wild o'er the hills, from the rapacious ſons
Of ſtill triumphant *Rome*?

Phoen. Perhaps they wheel'd,
As is their cuſtom to return more fierce.
Diſtruſt not Fortune while you yet may hope;
And think not, Madam, *Syphax* can reſign,
But with his ebbing life, in this laſt field,

At

At once a kingdom, and a queen he loves
Beyond ambition's brighteſt wiſh; for whom,
Nor mov'd by threats, nor bound by plighted faith,
He ſcorn'd the *Roman* friendſhip (that fair name
For ſlavery) and from th' engagements broke
Of *Scipio*, fam'd for every winning art,
The towering Genius of recover'd *Rome*.

Soph. Oh name him not! Theſe *Romans* ſtir my blood
To too much rage. I cannot bare the fortune
Of that proud people—Said you not, *Phoeniſſa*,
That *Syphax* lov'd me; which would fire his ſoul,
And urge him on to death or conqueſt? True,
He loves me with the madneſs of deſire;
His every paſſion is a ſlave to love;
Nor heeds he danger where I bid him go,
Nor leagues, nor intereſt. Hence theſe endleſs wars,
Theſe ravag'd countries, theſe ſucceſsleſs fights,
Suſtain'd for *Carthage*; whoſe defence alone,
Not love, engag'd my marriage-vows with his.
But know you not, that in the *Roman* camp
I have a lover too; a gallant, brave,
And diſappointed lover, full of wrath,
Returning to a kingdom, whence the ſword
Of *Syphax* drove him?

Phoen. Maſiniſſa?

Soph. He:
Young *Maſiniſſa*, the *Maſſylian* king,
The firſt addreſſer of my youth; for whom
My boſom felt a fond beginning wiſh,
Extinguiſh'd ſoon, when once, by *Scipio*'s arts
Won over, he became the ſlave of *Rome*.
E'er ſince, my heart has held him in contempt;
And thrown out each idea of his worth,
That there began to grow; [illegible] had it been

As

As much enthrall'd, and ſoft, as her's who ſits
In ſecret ſhades, or by the falling ſtream,
And waſtes her being in unutter'd pangs,
I would have broke, or cur'd it of its fondneſs.

Phoen. Heroic *Sophoniſba!*

Soph. No, *Phoeniſſa*;
It is not for the daughter of great *Aſdrubal*,
Deſcended from a long illuſtrious line
Of *Carthaginian* heroes, who have oft
Fill'd *Italy* with terror and diſmay,
And ſhook the walls of *Rome*, to pine in love,
Like a deluded maid; to give her life,
And heart high-beating in her country's cauſe,
To mean domeſtic cares, and idle joys,
Much leſs to one who ſtoops his neck to *Rome*,
An enemy to *Carthage*, *Maſiniſſa*.

Phoen. Think not I mean to check that glorious flame,
That juſt ambition which exalts your ſoul,
Glows on your cheek, and lightens in your eye.
Yet would he had been yours, this riſing prince!
For, truſt me, Fame is fond of *Maſiniſſa*.
His courage, conduct, deep-experienc'd youth,
And vaſt unbroken ſpirit in diſtreſs,
Still riſing ſtronger from the laſt defeat,
Are all the talk and terror too of *Afric*.
Who has not heard the ſtory of his woes?
How hard he came to his paternal realm:
Whence ſoon by *Syphax'* unrelenting hate,
And jealous *Carthage* driven, he with a few
Fled to the mountains. Then, I think, it was,
Hemm'd in a circle of impending rocks,
That all his followers fell, ſave fifty horſe;
Who, thence eſcap'd thro' ſecret paths abrupt,

Gain'd

Gain'd the *Clupean* plain. There overtook,
And urg'd by fierce ſurrounding foes, he burſt,
With four alone, ſore wounded, through their ranks,
And all amidſt a deep-ſwoln torrent plung'd.
Seiz'd with the whirling gulph, two ſunk; and two,
With him obliquely hurried down the ſtream,
Swam to the farther ſhore. Th' aſtoniſh'd foes
Stood check'd and ſhivering on the gloomy brink,
And deem'd him loſt in the devouring flood.
Mean-time the dauntleſs, undeſpairing youth
Lay in a cave conceal'd; curing his wounds
With mountain-herbs, and on his horſes fed:
Nor here, even at the loweſt ebb of life,
Stoop'd his aſpiring mind. What need I ſay,
How once again reſtor'd, and once again
Expell'd, among the *Garamantian* hills
He ſince has wander'd, till the *Roman* arm
Reviv'd his cauſe? and who ſhall reign alone,
Syphax or he, this day decides.

Soph. Enough.
Thou need'ſt not blazon thus his fame, *Phoeniſſa*.
Were he as glorious as the pride of woman
Could wiſh, in all her wantonneſs of thought;
The joy of humankind; wiſe, valiant, good;
With every praiſe, with every laurel crown'd;
The warrior's wonder, and the virgin's ſigh:
Yet this would cloud him o'er, this blemiſh all,
His mean ſubmiſſion to the *Roman* yoke;
That, falſe to *Carthage*, *Afric*, and himſelf,
With proffer'd hand and knee, he hither led
Theſe ravagers of earth.—But while we talk,
The work of fate goes on; even now, perhaps,
My dying country bleeds in every vein,
And the proud victor thunders at our gate.

SCENE II.

SCENE II.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA, *and to them a* MESSENGER *from the battle.*

Soph. Ha! whence art thou? Speak, tho' thy bleeding wounds
Might well excuſe thy tongue.
Meſſ. Madam, eſcap'd
From yon dire field, alas! I come——
Soph. No more.
At once thy meaning flaſhes o'er my ſoul.
Oh all my vaniſh'd hopes! oh fatal chance
Of undiſcerning war! And is all loſt?
An univerſal ruin?
Meſſ. Madam, all.
Of all our numerous hoſt ſcarce one is ſaved.
The king—
Soph. Ah! what of him?
Meſſ. His fiery ſteed,
By *Maſiniſſa*, the *Maſſylian* prince,
Pierc'd, threw him headlong to his cluſtering foes;
And now he comes in chains.
Soph. Oh worſt of ills!
Abſolute Gods! All *Afric* is in chains!
The weeping world in chains!—Oh is there not
A time, a righteous time, reſerv'd in fate,
When theſe oppreſſors of mankind ſhall feel
The miſeries they give; and blindly fight
For their own fetters too?—The conquering troops,
How points their motion?
Meſſ. At my heels they came,
Loud-ſhouting, dreadful in a cloud of duſt,
By *Maſiniſſa* headed.

Soph.

Soph. Hark! arriv'd.
The murmuring croud rolls frighted to the palace.
Thou bleed'ſt to death, poor faithful wretch! away,
And dreſs thy wounds, if life be worth thy care;
Tho' *Rome*, methinks, will loſe a ſlave in thee.
Would *Sophoniſba* were as near the verge
Of boundleſs and immortal liberty!

SCENE III.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

[*After a pauſe.*]

Soph. And wherefore not? When liberty is loſt,
Let abject cowards live; but in the brave
It were a treachery to themſelves, enough
To merit chains. And is it fit for me,
Who in my veins, from *Aſdrubal* deriv'd,
Hold *Carthaginian* enmity to *Rome*;
Who ſold my joyleſs youth to *Syphax'* arms,
For her deſtruction; is it fit for me
To ſit in feeble grief, and trembling wait
Th' approaching victor's rage: reſerv'd in chains
To grace his triumph, and become the ſcorn
Of every *Roman* dame?—Gods! how my ſoul
Diſdains the thought! This, this ſhall ſet it free.

[*Offers to ſtab herſelf.*]

Phoen. Hold, *Sophoniſba*, hold! my friend! my queen!
For whom alone I live! hold your raſh hand,
Nor thro' your guardian boſom ſtab your country.
That is our laſt reſort, and always ſure.
The gracious Gods are liberal of death;
To that laſt bleſſing lend a thouſand ways.
Think not I'd have you live to drag a chain,
And walk the triumph of inſulting *Rome*.

No,

No, by theſe tears of loyalty and love!
Ere I beheld ſo vile a fight, this hand
Should urge the faithful ponyard to your heart,
And glory in the deed. But, while hope lives,
Let not the generous die. 'Tis late before
The brave deſpair.

Soph. Thou copy of my ſoul!
And now my friend indeed! Shew me but hope,
One glimpſe of hope, and I'll renew my toils,
Call patience, labour, fortitude again,
The vext unjoyous day, and ſleepleſs night;
Nor ſhrink at danger, any ſhape of death,
Shew me the ſmalleſt hope! Alas, *Phœniſſa*,
Too fondly confident! Hope lives not here,
Fled, with her ſiſter Liberty, beyond
The *Garamantian* hills, to ſome ſteep wild,
Some undiſcover'd country, where the foot
Of *Roman* cannot come.

Phœn. Yes, there ſhe liv'd
With *Maſiniſſa* wounded and forlorn,
Amidſt the ſerpents hiſs, and tigers yell—

Soph. Why nameſt thou him?

Phœn. Madam, in this forgive
My forward zeal; from him proceeds our hope.
He lov'd you once; nor is your form impair'd,
Time has matur'd it into ſtronger charms:
Aſk his protection from the *Roman* power,
You muſt prevail; for *Sophoniſba* ſure
From *Maſiniſſa* cannot aſk in vain.

Soph. Now, by the prompting Genius of my country!
I thank thee for the thought. True, there is pain
Even in deſcending thus to beg protection
From that degenerate youth. But, oh! for thee,
My ſinking country, and again to gaul

This

This hated *Rome*, what would I not endure?
It ſhall be done, *Phoeniſſa*; tho' diſguſt
Hold back my ſtruggling heart, it ſhall be done.
But hark: they come; in this diſorder'd tumult
It fits not *Sophoniſba* to be ſeen.
I'll wait a calmer hour.—Let us retire.

SCENE IV.

MASINISSA, SYPHAX *in Chains*, NARVA, *Guards*, &c.

Syph. Is there no dungeon in this city, dark,
As is my troubled ſoul? that thus I'm brought
To my own palace, to thoſe rooms of ſtate,
Wont in another manner to receive me,
With other ſigns of royalty than theſe.
[*looking on his chains.*]

Maſ. I will not wound thee, nor inſult thee, *Syphax*,
With a recital of thy tyrant crimes.
A captive here I ſee thee, fallen below
My moſt revengeful wiſh; and all the rage,
The nobly fury that this morn inflam'd me,
Is ſunk to ſoft compaſſion. In the field,
The perilous front of war, there is the ſcene
Of brave revenge; and I have fought thee there,
Keen as the wounded lion ſeeks his foe.
But when a broken enemy, diſarm'd,
And helpleſs lyes; a falling ſword, an eye
With pity flowing, and an arm as weak
As infant ſoftneſs, then becomes the brave.
Believe it, *Syphax*, my relenting ſoul
Melts at thy fate.

Syph. This, this, is all I dread,
All I deteſt, this inſolence refin'd,
This affectation of ſuperior goodneſs.

Pitied

Pitied by thee!—Is there a form of death,
Of torture, and of infamy like that?
Ye partial Gods, to what have you debas'd me!
I feel your worſt; why ſhould I fear you more?
Hear me, vain youth! take notice—I abhor
Thy mercy, loath it.—Uſe me like a ſlave;
As I would thee, (delicious thought!) wert thou
Here crouching in my power.
Maſ. Outrageous man!
Thou can'ſt not drive me, by thy bittereſt rage
To an unmanly deed: not all thy wrongs
Can force my patient ſoul to ſtain its virtue.
Syph. I cannot wrong thee. When we drive the ſpear
Into the monſter's heart, to cruſh the ſerpent;
Can that be call'd a wrong? 'Tis ſelf defence.
Maſ. I'm loth to hurt thee more—The tyrant works
Too fierce already in thy rankled breaſt.
But ſince thou ſeem'ſt to rank me with thyſelf,
With great deſtroyers, with perfidious kings;
I muſt reply to thy licentious tongue,
Bid thee remember, whoſe accurſed ſword
Began this work of death; who broke the ties,
The holy ties, atteſted by the Gods,
Which bind the nations in the bond of peace;
Who meanly took advantage of my youth,
Unſkill'd in arms, unſettled on my throne,
And drove me to the deſart, there to dwell
With kinder monſters; who my cities ſack'd,
My country pillag'd, and my ſubjects murder'd;
Who ſtill purſu'd me with inveterate hate,
When open force prov'd vain, with ruffian arts,
The villain's dagger, baſe aſſaſſination.
And for no reaſon all. Brute violence
Alone thy plea.—What the leaſt provocation,

Say,

Say, canſt thou but pretend?
Syph. I needed none.
Nature has in my being ſown the ſeeds
Of enmity to thine.—Nay, mark me this;
Couldſt thou reſtore me to my former ſtate,
Strike off theſe chains, give me my crown again;
Yet muſt I ſtill, implacable to thee,
Seek eagerly thy death, or die myſelf.
Life cannot hold us both!—Unequal Gods!
Who love to diſappoint mankind, and take
All vengeance to yourſelves; why to the point
Of my long-flatter'd wiſhes did ye lift me;
Then ſink me down ſo low? Juſt as I aim'd
The glorious ſtroke that was to make me happy,
Why did you blaſt my ſtrong extended arm?
But that to mock us is your cruel ſport?
What elſe is human life?
Maſ. Thus always join'd
With an inhuman heart, and brutal manners,
Is irreligion to the ruling Gods;
Whoſe ſchemes our peeviſh ignorance arraigns,
Our thoughtleſs pride.—Thy loſt condition, *Syphax*,
Is nothing to the tumult of thy breaſt.
There lyes the ſting of evil, there the drop
That poiſons nature.—Ye myſterious powers!
Whoſe ways are ever gracious, ever juſt,
As ye think wiſeſt, beſt, diſpoſe of me;
But, whether thro' your gloomy depths I wander,
Or on your mountains walk; give me the calm,
The ſteady, ſmiling ſoul; where wiſdom ſheds
Eternal ſun-ſhine and eternal peace.
Then, if misfortune comes, ſhe brings along
The braveſt virtues. And ſo many great
Illuſtrious ſpirits have convers'd with woe,

Have

Have in her ſchool been taught, as are enough
To conſecrate diſtreſs, and make ambition
Even wiſh the frown beyond the ſmile of Fortune.
Syph. Torture and racks! This is the common trick
Of inſolent ſucceſs, unſuffering pride.
This prate of patience, and I know not what.
'Tis all a lie, impracticable rant;
And only tends to make me ſcorn thee more.
But why this talk? In mercy ſend me hence;
Yet—ere I go—Oh ſave me from diſtraction!
I know, hot youth, thou burneſt for my queen;
But by the majeſty of ruin'd kings,
And that commanding glory which ſurrounds her,
I charge thee touch her not!
Maſ. No, *Syphax*, no
Thou need'ſt not charge me. That were mean indeed,
A triumph that to thee. But could I ſtoop
Again to love her; Thou, what right haſt thou,
A captive, to her bed? Thy bonds divorce
And free her from thy power. All laws in this,
Roman and *Carthaginian*, all agree.
Syph. Here, here, begins the bitterneſs of ruin!
Here my chains grind me firſt!
Maſ. Poor *Sophoniſba!*
She too becomes the prize of conquering *Rome*;
What moſt her heart abhors. Alas, how hard
Will ſlavery ſit on her exalted ſoul!
She never will endure it, ſhe will die.
For not a *Roman burns* with nobler ardor,
A higher ſenſe of liberty than ſhe:
And tho' ſhe marry'd thee, her only ſtain,
Falſe to my youth, and faithleſs to her vows;
Yet I muſt own it, from a worthy cauſe,
From public ſpirit did her fault proceed.
Syph. Muſt I then hear her praiſe from thee? Con-
fuſion! Oh!

Oh! for a lonely dungeon! where I rather
Would talk with my own groans, and breath revenge,
Than in the manſions of the bleſt with thee.
Hell! Whither muſt I go?

Maſ. Unhappy man!
And is thy breaſt determin'd againſt peace,
On comfort ſhut?

Syph. On all, but death, from thee.

Maſ. Narva, be *Syphax* thy peculiar care:
And uſe him well, with tenderneſs and honour.
This evening *Laelius*, and to-morrow *Scipio*,
To *Cirtha* comes. Then let the *Romans* take
Their priſoner.

Syph. There ſhines a gleam of hope
Acroſs the gloom—From thee deliver'd—Eaſe
Breaths in that thought—Lead on—My heart grows
lighter!

SCENE V.

MASINISSA.

What dreadful havoc in the human breaſt
The paſſions make, when, unconfin'd and mad,
They burſt unguided by the mental eye,
The light of reaſon, which in various ways
Points them to good, or turns them back from ill,
O ſave me from the tumult of the ſoul!
From the wild beaſts within!—For circling ſands,
When the ſwift whirlwind whelms them o'er the lands;
The roaring deeps that to the clouds ariſe,
While through the ſtorm the darting lightning flies;
The monſter brood to which this land gives birth,
The blazing city, and the gaping earth;
All deaths, all tortures, in one pang combin'd,
Are gentle to the tempeſt of the mind.

END *of the* FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

ACT II. SCENE I.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

Maſ. THOU good old man, by whom my youth was form'd,
The firm companion of my various life,
I own 'tis true that *Sophoniſba's* image
Lives in my boſom ſtill; and at each glance
I take in ſecret of the bright idea,
A ſtrange diſorder ſeizes on my ſoul,
Which burns with ſtronger glory. Need I ſay,
How once ſhe had my vows? Till *Scipio* came,
Reſiſtleſs man; like a deſcending God,
And ſnatch'd me from the *Carthaginian* ſide.
To nobler *Rome*; beneath whoſe laurel'd brow,
And favouring eye, the nations grow polite,
Humane and happy. Then thou may'ſt remember,
Such is this woman's high impetuous ſpirit,
That all-controuling love ſhe bears her country,
Her *Carthage*; that for this ſhe ſacrific'd
To *Syphax*, unbelov'd, her blooming years,
And won him off from *Rome*.

Narv. My generous prince!
Applauding *Afric* of thy choice approves,
Fame claps her wings, and virtue ſmiles on thee,
Of peace thou ſoftner, and thou ſoul of war!
But oh beware of that fair foe to glory,
Woman! and moſt of *Carthaginian* woman!
Who has not heard of fatal *Punic* guile?
Of their ſtoln conqueſts? their inſidious leagues?
Their *Aſdrubals?* their *Hannibals?* with all
Their wily heroes? And, if ſuch their men,
What muſt their women be?

Maſ. You make me ſmile.
I thank thy honeſt zeal. But never dread
The firmneſs of my heart, the ſtrong attachment
I hold to *Rome*, to *Scipio*, and to glory.
Indeed, I cannot, would not quite forget
The grace of *Sophoniſba*; how ſhe look'd,
And talk'd, and mov'd a *Pallas*, or a *Juno!*
Accompliſh'd even in trifles, when ſhe ſtoop'd
From higher thoughts, and with a ſoftened eye
Gave her quick ſpirit into gayer life;
Then every word was livelineſs, and wit;
We heard the Muſes' ſong; and the dance ſwam
Thro' all the maze of harmony. Believe me,
I do not flatter; yet my panting ſoul
To *Scipio*'s friendſhip, to the fair purſuit
Of fame, and for my people's happineſs,
Reſign'd this *Sophoniſba*; and tho' now
Conſtrain'd by ſweet neceſſity to ſee her,
A captive in my power, yet will I ſtill
Reſign her.

Narv. I'll not doubt thy fortitude,
My *Maſiniſſa*, thy exalted purpoſe,
Not to be loſt in love: but ah! we know not,
Oft, till experience ſighs it to the ſoul,
The boundleſs witchcraft of enſnaring woman,
And our own ſlippery hearts. From *Scipio* learn
The temperance of heroes. I'll recount
Th' inſtructive ſtory, what theſe eyes beheld;
Perhaps you've heard it; but 'tis pleaſing ſtill,
Tho' told a thouſand times.

Maſ. I burn to hear it.
Loſt by my late misfortunes in the deſart,
I liv'd a ſtranger to the voice of fame,
To *Scipio*'s laſt exploits. Indulge me now.

Great

Great actions, even recounted, raiſe the mind;
But when a friend has done them, then, my *Narva*,
They doubly charm us; then with more than wonder,
Even with a ſort of vanity, we liſten.

Narv. When to his glorious firſt eſſay in war,
New *Carthage* fell; there all the flower of *Spain*
Were kept in hoſtage; a full field preſenting
For *Scipio*'s generoſity to ſhine.
And then it was, that when the hero heard
How I to thee belong'd, he with large gifts,
And friendly words diſmiſs'd me.

Maſ. I remember.
And in his favour that engag'd me firſt.
But to thy ſtory.

Narv. What with admiration
Struck every heart, was this—A noble virgin,
Conſpicuous far o'er all the captive dames,
Was mark'd the general's prize. She weep'd, and bluſh'd,
Young, freſh and blooming like the morn. An eye,
As when the blue ſky trembles thro' a cloud
Of pureſt white. A ſecret charm combin'd
Her features, and infus'd enchantment round them.
Her ſhape was harmony.—But eloquence
Beneath her beauty fails: which ſeem'd on purpoſe,
By nature laviſh'd on her, that mankind
Might ſee the virtue of a hero tried
Almoſt beyond the ſtretch of human force.
Soft as ſhe paſs'd along, with downcaſt eyes,
Where gentle ſorrow ſwell'd, and now and then
Dropt o'er her modeſt cheek a trickling tear,
The *Roman* legions languiſh'd; and hard war
Felt more than pity. Ev'n their chief himſelf,
As on his high tribunal rais'd he ſat,

Turn'd from the dangerous fight, and chiding aſk'd
His officers, if by this gift they meant
To cloud his glory in its very dawn.
Maſ. O Gods! my fluttering heart! On, ſtop not, *Narva.*
Narv. She, queſtion'd of her birth, in trembling accents,
With tears and bluſhes broken, told her tale.
But when he found her royally deſcended,
Of her old captive parents the ſole joy;
And that a hapleſs *Celtiberian* prince,
Her lover and belov'd, forgot his chains,
His loſt dominions, and for her alone
Wept out his tender ſoul; ſudden the heart
Of this young, conquering, loving, godlike *Roman*,
Felt all the great divinity of virtue.
His wiſhing youth ſtood check'd, his tempting power,
Reſtrain'd by kind humanity.—At once
He for her parents and her lover call'd.
The various ſcene imagine: how his troops
Look'd dubious on, and wonder'd what he meant;
While ſtretch'd below the trembling ſuppliants lay,
Rack'd by a thouſand mingling paſſions, fear,
Hope, jealouſy, diſdain, ſubmiſſion, grief,
Anxiety, and love in every ſhape.
To theſe as different ſentiments ſucceeded,
As mixt emotions, when the man divine
Thus the dread ſilence to the lover broke.
" We both are young, both charm'd. The right of war
" Has put thy beauteous miſtreſs in my power;
" With whom I could in the moſt ſacred ties
" Live out a happy life: but know that *Romans*
" Their hearts as well enemies can conquer.
" Then take her to thy ſoul; and with her take

" Thy

" Thy liberty and kingdom. In return
" I aſk but this. When you behold theſe eyes,
" Theſe charms, with tranſport; be a friend to *Rome.*"
Maſ. There ſpoke the ſoul of *Scipio*--But the Lovers?
Narv. Joy and extatic wonder held them mute;
While the loud camp, and all the cluſt'ring croud,
That hung around, rang with repeated ſhouts.
Fame took th' alarm, and thro' reſounding *Spain*
Blew faſt the fair report; which, more than arms,
Admiring nations to the *Romans* gain'd.
Maſ. My friend in glory! thy awaken'd prince
Springs at thy noble tale. It fires my ſoul,
And nerves each thought anew; apt oft perhaps,
Too much, too much, to ſlacken into love.
But now the ſoft oppreſſion flies; and all
My mounting powers expand to deeds like theſe.
Who, who would live, my *Narva*, juſt to breathe
This idle air, and indolently run,
Day after day, the ſtill-returning round
Of life's mean offices, and ſickly joys?
But, in the ſervice of mankind, to be
A guardian-god below—Still to employ
The mind's brave ardor in heroic aims,
Such as may raiſe us o'er the groveling herd,
And make us ſhine for ever, That is life.
Bleed every vein about me; every nerve
With anguiſh tremble; every ſinew ake;
The third time may I loſe my crown; again
Wander the falſe inhoſpitable Syrts;
If, to reward my toils, the Gods will grant me
To ſhare the wreath of fame on *Scipio*'s brow.
But ſee, ſhe comes, the beauteous *Sophoniſba!*
Behold, my friend, mark her majeſtic port!

SCENE II.

MASINISSA, SOPHONISBA, NARVA, PHOENISSA.

Soph. Behold, victorious prince! the ſcene revers'd;
And *Sophoniſba* kneeling here; a captive,
O'er whom the Gods, thy fortune, and thy virtue,
Give thee unqueſtion'd power of life and death.
If ſuch a one may raiſe her ſuppliant voice,
Once muſic to thy ear; if ſhe may touch
Thy knee, thy purple, and thy victor-hand;
Oh liſten, *Maſiniſſa!* Let thy ſoul
Intenſely liſten! while I fervent pray,
And ſtrong adjure thee, by that regal ſtate,
In which with equal pomp we lately ſhone;
By the *Numidian* name, our common boaſt,
And by thoſe houſhold Gods; who may, I wiſh,
With better omens take thee to this palace,
Than *Syphax* hence they ſent. As is thy pleaſure,
In all beſide determine of my fate.
This, this alone I beg. Never, oh never!
Into the cruel, proud, and hated power
Of *Romans* let me fall. Since angry heaven
Will have it ſo, that I muſt be a ſlave,
And that a galling chain muſt bind theſe hands,
It were ſome little ſoftening in my doom,
To call a kindred ſon of the ſame clime,
A native of *Numidia*, my lord.
But if thou canſt not ſave me from the *Romans*,
If this ſad favour be beyond thy power;
At leaſt to give me death is what thou canſt.
Here ſtrike—my naked boſom courts thy ſword;
And my laſt breath ſhall bleſs thee, *Maſiniſſa!*

Maſ. Riſe, *Sophoniſba*, riſe. To ſee thee thus

Is a revenge I ſcorn; and all the man
Within me, though much injur'd by thy pride,
And ſpirit too tempeſtuous for thy ſex,
Yet bluſhes to behold thus at my feet,
Thus proſtrate low, her, for whom kings have kneel'd,
The faireſt, but the falſeſt of her ſex.

Soph. Spare thy reproach—'Tis cruel thus to loſe
In rankling diſcord, and ungenerous ſtriſe,
The few remaining moments that divide me
From the moſt loath'd of evils, *Roman* bondage!
Yes, ſhut thy heart againſt me; ſhut thy heart
Againſt compaſſion, every humane thought,
Even recollected love: yet know, raſh youth!
That when thou ſeeſt me ſwell their lofty triumph,
Thou ſeeſt thyſelf in me. This is my day;
To-morrow will be thine. But here, be ſure,
Here will I lie on this vile earth, forlorn,
Of hope abandon'd, ſince deſpis'd by thee;
Theſe locks all looſe and ſordid in the duſt;
This ſullied boſom growing to the ground,
Till the remorſeleſs ſoldier comes, more fierce
From recent blood, and, in thy very eye,
Lays raging his rude ſanguinary graſp
On theſe weak limbs, and tortures them with chains.
Then if no friendly ſteel, no nectar'd draught
Of deadly poiſon, can enlarge my ſoul;
It will indignant burſt from a ſlave's body;
And, join'd to mighty *Dido*, ſcorn ye all.

Maſ. Oh *Sophoniſba!* 'tis not ſafe to hear thee;
And I miſtook my heart, to truſt it thus.
Hence let me fly.

Soph. You ſhall not, *Maſiniſſa!*
Here will I hold you, tremble here for ever;
Here unremitting grow, till you conſent.

And canſt thou think, oh! canſt thou think to leave me,
Expos'd, deſenceleſs, wretched, here alone,
A prey to *Romans* fluſh'd with blood and conqueſt,
The ſubject of their ſcorn or baſer love?
Sure *Maſiniſſa* cannot: and, tho' chang'd,
Tho' cold as that averted look he wears;
Sure love can ne'er in generous breaſts be loſt
To that degree, as not from ſhame and outrage
To ſave what once they lov'd.

Maſ. Enchantment! Madneſs!
What would'ſt thou, *Sophoniſba?*—Oh my heart!
My treacherous heart!

Soph. What would I, *Maſiniſſa?*
My mean requeſt ſits bluſhing on my cheek.
To be thy ſlave, young prince, is what I beg;
Here *Sophoniſba* kneels to be thy ſlave;
Yet kneels in vain. But thou'rt a ſlave thyſelf,
And canſt not from the *Romans* ſave one woman;
Her, who was once the triumph of thy ſoul;
Ere they ſeduc'd it by their lying glory.
Immortal Gods! and am I fallen ſo low?
Scorn'd by a lover? by the man whom once
My heart, alas! too much inclin'd to love,
Before he ſunk into the ſlave of *Rome?*
Nought can be worth this baſeneſs, life nor empire!
I loath me for it—On this kinder earth,
Then leave me, leave me, to deſpair and death!

Maſ. I cannot bear her tears.—Riſe, quickly riſe,
In all the conquering majeſty of charms,
O *Sophoniſba*, riſe! while here I ſwear,
By the tremendous powers that rule mankind!
By heaven, and earth, and hell! by love and glory!
The *Romans* ſhall not hurt you—*Romans* cannot;
For *Rome* is generous as the Gods themſelves,

And

And honours, not inſults, a generous foe.
Yet ſince you dread them, take this royal hand,
The pledge of ſurety, by which kings are bound;
By which I hold you mine, and vow to treat you
With all the ſoftneſs of remember'd love,
All that can ſooth thy fate, and make thee happy.
Soph. I thank thee, *Maſiniſſa!* now the ſame,
The ſame bright youth, exalted, full of ſoul,
With whom in happier days I us'd to paſs
The tender hour; while, dawning fair in love,
All ſong and ſweetneſs, life ſet joyous out;
Ere the black tempeſt of Ambition roſe,
And drove us different ways.—Thus dreſt in war,
In nodding plumes, o'er caſt with ſullen thought,
With purpos'd vengeance dark, I knew thee not;
But now breaks out the beauteous ſun anew,
The gay *Numidian* ſhines, who warm'd me once,
Whoſe love was glory.—Vain ideas, hence!
—Long ſince, my heart, to nobler paſſions known,
Has your acquaintance ſcorn'd.
Maſ. Oh! while you talk,
Enchanting fair one! my deluded thought
Runs back to days of love; when fancy ſtill
Found worlds of beauty ever-riſing new
To the tranſported eye; when flattering hope
Form'd endleſs proſpects of encreaſing bliſs;
And ſtill the credulous heart believ'd them all,
Even more than love could promiſe.—But the ſcene
Is full of danger for a youthful eye;
I muſt not, dare not, will not look that way.
O hide it, wiſdom, glory, from my view!
Or in ſweet ruin I ſhall ſink again.
Diſtemper clouds thy cheek; thy colour goes.
Retire, and from the troubles of the day

Repoſe thy weary ſoul, worn out with care,
And rough unhappy thought.
Soph. May *Maſiniſſa*
Ne'er want the goodneſs he has ſhewn to me.

SCENE III.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

Maſ. The danger's o'er: I've heard the *Siren*'s ſong,
Yet ſtill to virtue hold my ſteady courſe.
I mark'd thy kind concern, thy friendly fears,
And own them juſt; for ſhe has beauty, *Narva*,
So full, ſo perfect, with ſo great a ſoul
Inform'd, ſo rais'd with animating ſpirit,
As ſtrikes like lightning from the hand of *Jove*,
And raiſes love to glory.
Narv. Ah, my prince!
Too true, it is too true; her fatal charms
Are powerful, and to *Maſiniſſa*'s heart
Know but too well the way. And art thou ſure,
That the ſoft poiſon, which within thy veins
Lay unextinguiſh'd, is not rouz'd anew,
Is not this moment working through thy ſoul?
Doſt thou not love? Confeſs.
Maſ. What ſaid my friend
Of poiſon? love? of loving *Sophoniſba?*
Yes, I admire her, wonder at her beauty,
And he who does not is as dull as earth,
The cold unanimated form of man,
Ere lighted up with the celeſtial fire.
Where'er ſhe goes ſtill admiration gazes,
And liſtens while ſhe talks. Even thou thyſelf,
Who ſaw'ſt her with the malice of a friend,

Even

Even thou thyſelf admireſt her.—Doſt thou not?
Say, ſpeak ſincerely.

Narv. She has charms indeed;
But has ſhe charms like virtue? Tho' majeſtic,
Does ſhe command us with a force like glory?

Maſ. All glory's in her eye! Perfection thence
Looks from its throne; and on her ample brow
Sits majeſty. Her features glow with life,
Warm with heroic ſoul. Her mein! ſhe walks,
As when a towering goddeſs treads this earth.
But when her language flows; when ſuch a mind
Deſcends to ſooth, to ſigh, to weep, to graſp
The tottering knee; oh! *Narva*, *Narva*, oh!
Expreſſion here is dumb.

Narv. Alas! my Lord,
Is this the talk of ſober admiration!
Are theſe the ſallies of a heart at eaſe?
Of *Scipio*'s friend? Is this thy ſteady virtue!

Maſ. I tell thee once again, too cautious man,
That when a woman begs, a matchleſs woman,
A woman once belov'd, a fallen queen,
A *Sophoniſba!* when ſhe twines her charms
Around our ſoul, and all her power of looks,
Of tears, of ſighs, of ſoftneſs, plays upon us;
He's more or leſs than man who can reſiſt her.
For me, my ſtedfaſt ſoul approves, nay more,
Exults in the protection it has promis'd.
And nought, tho' plighted honour did not bind me,
Should ſhake the virtuous purpoſe of my heart;
Nought, by th' avenging Gods! who heard my vow,
And hear me now again.

Narv. And was it then
For this you conquer'd?

Maſ. Yes, and triumph in it.

This

This was my fondeſt wiſh; the very point,
The plume of glory, the delicious prize
Of bleeding years. I muſt have been a brute,
A greater monſter than *Numidia* breeds,
A horror to myſelf; if on the ground,
Caſt vilely from me, I th' illuſtrious fair
Had left to bondage, bitterneſs, and death.
Nor is there aught in war worth what I feel;
In pomp and hollow ſtate, like the ſweet ſenſe
Of inſelt bleſs; which the reflection gives me
Of ſaving thus ſuch excellence and beauty
From what her generous ſoul abhors the moſt.

Narv. My friend! my royal lord! alas! you ſlide,
You ſink from virtue. On the giddy brink
Of fate you ſtand.—One ſtep, and all is loſt!

Maſ. No more, no more! if this is being loſt,
And ruſhing down the precipice of fate;
Then down I go, far, far beyond the reach
Of ſcrupulous dull precaution.—Leave me, *Narva*,
I want to be alone, to find ſome ſhade,
Some ſolitary gloom; there to ſhake off
Theſe harſh tumultuous cares that vex my life,
This ſick ambition on itſelf recoiling;
And there to liſten to the gentle voice,
The ſigh of peace, ſomething, I know not what,
That whiſpers tranſport to my heart.—Farewel.

SCENE IV.

NARVA *alone.*

Struck, and he knows it not.—So when the field,
Elate in heart, the warrior ſcorns to yield;
The ſtreaming blood can ſcarce convince his eyes;
Nor will he feel the wound by which he dies.

The End of the Second Act.

ACT

ACT III. SCENE I.

MASINISSA *alone.*

IN vain I wander thro' the ſhade for Peace;
'Tis with the calm alone, the pure of heart,
That there the goddeſs talks—But in my breaſt
Some buſy thought, ſome ſecret-eating pang,
Still reſtleſs throbs, on *Sophoniſba* ſtill
Earneſt, intent, devoted all to her.
What may this mean? 'Tis love, almighty love!
Returning on me with a ſtronger tide.
Come to my breaſt, thou roſy-ſmiling god!
Come unconfin'd! bring all thy joys along,
All thy ſoft cares, and mix them copious here.
Quick, let me fly to her; and there forget
This tedious abſence, war, ambition, noiſe,
Friendſhip itſelf, the vanity of fame,
And all but love, for love is more than all!

SCENE II.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

Maſ. Welcome again, my friend.—Come nearer, *Narva*;
Lend me thine arm, and I will tell thee all,
Unfold my ſecret heart, whoſe every pulſe
With *Sophoniſba* beats.—Nay, hear me out—
Swift, as I mus'd, the conflagration ſpread;
At once too ſtrong, too general, to be quench'd.
I love, and I approve it, doat upon her.
Even think theſe minutes loſt I talk with thee.
Heavens! what emotions have poſſeſs'd my ſoul!
Snatch'd by a moment into years of paſſion.

Narv.

Narv. Ah, *Maſiniſſa!*—
Maſ. Argue not againſt me,
Talk down the circling winds that lift the deſart;
And when by lightning fir'd the foreſts blaze,
Talk down the flame, but not my ſtronger love.
I have for love a thouſand thouſand reaſons,
Dear to the heart, and potent o'er the ſoul.
My every thought, reflection, mem'ry, all
Are a perpetual ſpring of tenderneſs;
Oh, *Sophoniſba!* I am wholly thine.
Narv. Is this deceitful day then come to nought,
This day, that ſet thee on a double throne?
That gave thee *Syphax* chain'd, thy deadly foe?
With perfect conqueſt crown'd thee, perfect glory?
Is it ſo ſoon eclips'd? and does yon ſun,
Yon ſetting ſun, who this fair morning ſaw thee
Ride through the ranks of long extended war,
As radiant as himſelf; and when the ſtorm
Began, beheld thee tread the riſing ſurge
Of battle high, and drive it on the foe;
Does he now, bluſhing, ſee thee ſunk ſo weak?
Caught in a ſmile? the captive of a look?
I cannot name it without tears.
Maſ. Away?
I'm ſick of war, of the deſtroying trade,
Smooth'd-o'er, and gilded with the name of glory.
In vain you ſpread the martial field to me,
My happier eyes are turn'd another way,
Behold it not; or if they do, behold it
Shrunk up, far off, a viſionary ſcene;
As to the waking man appears the dream.
Narv. Or rather, as realities appear,
The virtue, pomp, and dignities of life,
In ſick diſorder'd dreams.

Maſ.

Maſ. Think not I ſcorn
The taſk of heroes when oppreſſion rages,
And lawleſs violence confounds the world.
Who would not bleed with tranſport for his country,
Tear every tender paſſion from his heart,
And greatly die to make a people happy;
Ought not to taſte of happineſs himſelf,
And is low-ſoul'd indeed—But ſure, my friend,
There is a time for love; or life were vile,
A tedious circle of unjoyous days,
With ſenſeleſs hurry fill'd, diſtaſteful, wretched,
Till love comes ſmiling in, and brings his ſweets,
His healing ſweets, ſoft cares, tranſporting joys,
That make the poor account of life compleat,
And juſtify the Gods.

Narv. Miſtaken Prince,
I blame not love. But—

Maſ. Slander not my paſſion.
I've ſuffer'd thee too far.—Take heed, old man,—
Love will not bear an accuſation, *Narva.*

Nar. I'll ſpeak the truth, when truth and friendſhip call,
Nor fear thy frown unkind.—Thou haſt no right
To *Sophoniſba*; ſhe belongs to *Rome.*

Maſ. Ha! ſhe belongs to *Rome.*—'Tis true—My thoughts
Where have you wander'd, not to think of this?
Think e'er I promis'd? e'er I lov'd?—Confuſion!
I know not what to ſay—I ſhould have lov'd,
Tho' *Jove* in muttering thunder had forbid it.
But *Rome* will not refuſe ſo ſmall a boon,
Whoſe gifts are kingdoms; *Rome* muſt grant it ſure,
One captive to my wiſh, one poor requeſt.
So ſmall to them, but oh ſo dear to me!
In this my heart confides.

Nar. De-

Narv. Deluſive love!
Thro' what wild projects is the frantic mind
Beguil'd by thee?—And think'ſt thou that the *Romans*,
The ſenators of *Rome*, theſe gods on earth,
Wiſe, ſteady to the right, ſeverely juſt,
All uncorrupt, and like eternal fate
Not to be mov'd, will liſten to the ſigh
Of idle love? They who, when virtue calls,
Will not the voice itſelf of nature hear,
But bid their children bleed before their eyes;
Will they regard the light fantaſtic pangs
Of a fond heart? and with thy kingdom give thee
Their moſt inveterate foe, from their firm ſide,
Like *Syphax*, to delude thee? and the point
Of their own bounty on themſelves to turn?
Thou canſt not hope it ſure.—Impoſſible!

Maſ. What ſhall I do? be now the friend exerted.
For love and honour preſs me; love and honour,
All that is dear and excellent in life,
All that or ſoothes the man or lifts the hero,
Engage my ſoul.

Narv. Raſh was your vow, my lord.
I know not what to counſel—When you vow'd,
You vow'd what was not in your power to grant;
And therefore 'tis not binding.

Maſ. Never! never!
Oh never will I falſify that vow!
Ere then deſtruction ſeize me? Yes, ye *Romans*,
If it be ſo, there, take your kingdoms back,
Your friendſhip, your eſteem, all, all but her.
Hold—Let me think a while—It ſhall be ſo!
By all th' inſpiring Gods that prompt my thought.
This very night ſhall ſolemnize our vows;
And the next joyous ſun, that viſits *Afric*,

See *Sophoniſba* ſeated on my throne.—
Then muſt they ſpare my queen.—They will not, ſurely,
They will not dare, force not my conſort from me.
Narv. And is it poſſible, ye Gods that rule us!
Can *Maſiniſſa* in his pride of youth,
In his meridian glory ſhining wide,
The light of *Afric*, can the friend of *Scipio*
Take a falſe woman to his nuptial bed,
Who ſcorn'd him for a tyrant old and cruel,
His rancorous foe? and gave her untouch'd bloom,
Her ſpring of charms to *Syphax*?
Maſ. Curſt remembrance!
This, this has thrown a ſerpent to my heart;
While it o'erflow'd with tenderneſs, with joy,
With all the ſweetneſs of exulting love.
Now nought but gall is there, and burning poiſon.
Yes, it was ſo!—Curſe on her vain ambition!
What had her meddling ſex to do with ſtates?
Forſook for him, Juſt Gods! for hateful *Syphax*,
My tender, faithful love for his groſs paſſion!
The thought is hell!—Oh I had treaſur'd up
A world of indignation, years of ſcorn;
But her ſad ſuppliant witchcraft ſooth'd it down.
Where is ſhe now, that it may burſt upon her?
Haſte, bring her to me; tho' my plighted faith
Shall ſave her from the *Romans*, yet I'll tell her,
That I will never, never ſee her more!
Ha! there ſhe comes.—Pernicious fair one!—Leave me.

SCENE III.

SOPHONISBA, MASINISSA.

Soph. Forgive this quick return—The rage, confuſion,
And mingled paſſions of this luckleſs day,

Made

Made me forget another warm requeſt
I had to beg of generous *Maſiniſſa:*
For oh to whom, ſave to the generous, can
The miſerable fly?—But much diſturb'd
You look, and ſcowl upon me a denial.
Repentance frowns on your contracted brow.
Already, weary of my ſinking fate,
You ſeem to droop; and for unhappy *Syphax*
I ſhall implore in vain.

Maſ. For *Syphax?* vengeance!
And canſt thou mention him? Oh grant me breath!

Soph. I know, young prince, how deep he has provok'd thee;
How keen he ſought thy youth; thro' what a fire
Of great diſtreſs, from which you come the brighter.
On mere indifferent objects, common bounty
Will ſhower relief; but when our bittereſt foe
Lies ſunk, diſarm'd, and deſolate, then! then!
To feel the mercies of a pitying God,
To raiſe him from the duſt, and that beſt way
To triumph o'er him, is heroic goodneſs.
Oh let unhappy *Syphax* touch thy heart,
Victorious *Maſiniſſa*!

Maſ. Monſtrous this!
Still doſt thou blaſt me with that curſed name!
The very name thy conſcious guilt ſhould ſhun.
Had he but driven me from my native throne,
From regal pomp and luxury, to dwell
Among the foreſt beaſts; to bear the beam
Of red *Numidian* ſuns, and the dank dew
Of cold unſhelter'd nights; to mix with wolves,
To hunt with hungry tygers for my prey,
And thirſt with *Dipſads* on the burning ſand;
I could have thank'd him for his angry leſſon;

The

The fair occaſion that his rage afforded
Of learning patience, fortitude, and hope,
Still riſing ſtronger on incumbent fate.
But there is one unpardonable outrage,
That ſcorches up the tear in pity's eye,
And even ſweet mercy's ſelf converts to gall.
I cannot—will not name it—Down my heart,
My ſwelling heart!

Soph. Ah whence this ſudden ſtorm,
That hurries all thy ſoul?

Maſ. And doſt thou aſk?
Aſk thy own faithleſs heart, ſnatch'd from my vows,
From the warm wiſhes of my ſpringing youth,
And given to that old hated monſter, *Syphax*.
Perfidious *Sophoniſba!*

Soph. Nay, no more.
With too much truth I can return thy charge,
Why didſt thou drive me to that cruel choice?
Why leave me, with my country, to deſtruction?
Why break thy love, thy faith, and join the *Romans?*

Maſ. By heavens! the *Romans* were my better genius,
Sav'd me from ſhame, and form'd my youth to glory;
But for the *Romans* I had been a ſavage,
A wretch like *Syphax*, a forgotten thing,
The tool of *Carthage*.

Soph. Meddle not with *Carthage*,
Impatient youth; for that I will not bear;
Tho' I am here thy ſlave, I will not bear it.
Not one baſe word of *Carthage*—on thy ſoul!

Maſ. How vain thy frenzy! Go, command thy ſlaves,
Thy fools, thy *Syphaxes*; but I will ſpeak,
Speak loud of *Carthage*, call it falſe, ungenerous;
The *Romans* are the light, the glory—

Soph. *Romans!*

Perdition

Perdition on the *Romans!*—on their friends,
On all but thee.—The *Romans* are the ſcourge
Of the vext world, deſtroyers of mankind,
And all beneath the ſmooth diſſembling maſk
Of juſtice, and compaſſion; as if ſlave
Was but another name for civiliz'd.
Againſt her tyrant power, each generous ſword
Of every nation ſhould be drawn—While *Carthage*
Unblemiſh'd riſes on the baſe of commerce,
Founds her fair empire on that common good,
And aſks of heaven nought but the winds and tides
To carry plenty, letters, ſcience, wealth,
Civility, and grandeur, round the world.

Maſ. No more compare them! for the Gods themſelves
Declare for *Rome.*

Soph. It was not always ſo.
The Gods declar'd for *Hannibal*; when *Italy*
Blaz'd all around him, all her ſtreams ran blood;
And when at *Trebia*, *Thraſymene* and *Cannae*,
The *Carthaginian* ſword with *Roman* blood
Was drunk—Oh, that he then, on that dread day,
While lifeleſs conſternation blacken'd *Rome*,
Had raz'd th' accurſed city to the ground,
And ſav'd the world!—When will it come again,
A day ſo glorious, and ſo big with vengeance
On thoſe my ſoul abhors?

Maſ. Avert it, Heaven!
The *Romans* not enſlave, but ſave the world
From *Carthaginian* rage—

Soph. I'll bear no more!
Nor tenderneſs, nor life, nor liberty,
Nothing ſhall make me bear it.—Rather, rather,
Deteſted as ye are, ye *Romans*, take me—

Oh,

Oh, pitying take me to your nobler chains,
And ſave me from this abject youth, your ſlave!
—How canſt thou kill me thus?—
Maſ. I meant it not.
I only meant to tell thee, haughty fair one!
How this alone might bind me to the *Romans*;
That, in a frail and ſliding hour, they ſnatch'd me
From the perdition of thy love, which fell,
Like baleful lightning, where I moſt could wiſh,
And prov'd deſtruction to my mortal foe.
Oh pleaſing! fortunate!
Soph. I thank them too.
By heavens! for once, I love them; ſince they turn'd
My better thoughts from thee. Thou—But I will not
Give thee the name thy mean ſervility
From my juſt ſcorn deſerves.
Maſ, Oh freely call me
By every name thy fury can inſpire;
Delight me with thy hate.—I love no more—
It will not hurt me, *Sophoniſba.*—Love,
Long ſince I gave it to the paſſing winds,
And would not be a lover for the world.
A lover is the very fool of nature,
Made ſick by his own wantonneſs of thought,
His fever'd fancy: while, to your own charms
Imputing all, you ſwell with boundleſs pride.
Shame on the wretch! he ſhould be driven from men,
To live with *Aſian* ſlaves, in one ſoft herd,
All worthleſs. all ridiculous together.
For me; this moment, here I mean to bid
Farewel, a glad farewel to love and thee.
Soph. With all my ſoul, farewel!—Yet ere you go,
Know that my ſpirit burns as high as thine,
As high to glory, and as low to love.

Thy

Thy promiſes are void; and I abſolve thee,
Here in the preſence of the liſtning Gods.—
Take thy repented vows—To proud *Cornelia*
I'd rather be a ſlave, to *Scipio*'s mother,
Than queen of all *Numidia*, by the favour
Of him, who dares inſult the helpleſs thus. [*Pauſing.*]
Still doſt thou ſtay? behold me then again,
Hopeleſs and wild, a loſt abandon'd ſlave.
And now thy brutal purpoſe muſt be gain'd.
Away, thou cruel, and ungenerous, go!
Maſ. No, not for worlds would I reſume my vow!
Diſhonour blaſt me then! all kinds of ills
Fill up my cup of bitterneſs and ſhame!
When I reſign thee to triumphant *Rome.*
Oh lean not thus dejected to the ground!
The ſight is miſery.—What roots me here? [*Aſide.*]
Alas! I have urg'd my fooliſh heart too far;
And love depreſs'd recoils with greater force.
Oh *Sophoniſba!*
Soph. By thy pride ſhe dies.
Inhuman prince!
Maſ. Thine is the triumph, Love!
By heaven and earth! I cannot hold it more.
Wretch that I was, to cruſh th' unhappy thus;
The faireſt too, the deareſt of her ſex!
For whom my ſoul could die!—Turn, quickly turn,
O *Sophoniſba!* my beloved! my glory!
Turn and forgive the violence of love,
Of love that knows no bounds!
Soph. And can it be?
Can that ſoft paſſion prove ſo fierce of heart,
As on the tears of miſery, the ſighs
Of death, to feaſt? to torture what it loves?
Maſ. Yes, it can be, thou goddeſs of my ſoul!

Whoſe

Whoſe each emotion is but varied love,
All over love, its powers, its paſſions, all:
Its anger, indignation, fury, love;
Its pride, diſdain, even deteſtation, love.
And when it, wild, reſolves to love no more,
Then is the triumph of exceſſive love.
Didſt thou not mark me? mark the dubious rage,
That tore my heart with anguiſh while I talk'd?
Thou didſt; and muſt forgive ſo kind a fault.
What would thy trembling lips?

Soph. Oh! let me die,
For ſuch another ſtorm, ſo much contempt
Thrown out on *Carthage*, ſo much praiſe on *Rome*,
Were worſe than death. Why ſhould I longer tire
My weary fate? The moſt relentleſs *Roman*,
What could he more?

Maſ. Oh *Sophoniſba*, hear!
See me thy ſuppliant now. Talk not of death.
I have no life but thee.—Alas, Alas!
Hadſt thou a little tenderneſs for me,
The ſmalleſt part of what I feel, thou wouldſt—
What wouldſt thou not forgive? But how indeed,
How can I hope it? Yet I from this moment
Will ſo devote my being to thy pleaſure,
So live alone to gain thee; that thou muſt,
If there is human nature in thy breaſt,
Feel ſome relenting warmth.

Soph. Well, well, 'tis paſt.
To be inexorable ſuits not ſlaves.

Maſ. Spare, ſpare that word; it ſtabs me to the ſoul;
My crown, my life, and liberty are thine.
Oh give my paſſion way! My heart is full,
Oppreſt by love; and I could number tears,
With all the dews that ſprinkle o'er the morn;

Oh!

Oh! thou haſt melted down my ſtubborn ſoul
To female tenderneſs—Enough, enough,
Have we been cheated by the trick of ſtate,
For *Rome* and *Carthage* ſuffer'd much too long;
And led by gaudy phantoms, wander'd far,
Far from our bliſs, But now ſince met again,
Since here I hold thee, circle all perfection
In theſe bleſt arms; ſince fate too preſſes hard,
Since *Rome* and ſlavery drive thee to the brink;
Let this immediate night exchange our vows,
Secure my bliſs, our future fortunes blend,
Set thee, the queen of beauty, on my throne,
And on theſe lovely brows for empire form'd
Place *Afric*'s nobleſt crown—A wretched gift
To what my love would give!

Soph. What! marry thee?
This night?

Maſ. Thou dear one! yes, this very night
Let injur'd *Hymen* have his rights reſtor'd,
And bind our broken vows.—Think, ſerious, think.
On what I plead.—A thouſand reaſons urge.—
Captivity diſſolves thy former marriage;
And if the meaneſt vulgar thus are freed,
Can *Sophoniſba* to a ſlave, to *Syphax*,
The moſt exalted of her ſex, be bound?
Beſides it is the beſt, perhaps ſole way,
To ſave thee from the *Romans*; and muſt ſure
Bar their pretenſions: or if ruin comes,
To periſh with thee is to periſh happy.

Soph. Yet muſt I ſtill inſiſt—

Maſ. It ſhall be ſo.
I know thy purpoſe: it would plead for *Syphax*.
He ſhall have all, thou deareſt! ſhall have all,
Crowns, trifles, kingdoms, all again, but thee,

But thee, thou more than all!
Soph. Bear witneſs, Heaven; [*Aſide.*]
This is alone for *Carthage.*
Gain'd by Goodneſs [*To him.*]
I may be thine. Expect no love, no ſighing.
Perhaps, hereafter, I may learn again
To hold thee dear. If on theſe terms thou can'ſt,
Here take me, take me, to thy wiſhes.
Maſ. Yes,
Yes, *Sophoniſba!* as a wretch takes life
From off the rack.—All wild with frantic joy,
Thus hold thee, preſs thee, to my bounding heart;
And bleſs the bounteous Gods.—Can Heaven give more?
Oh happy! happy! happy!—Come, my fair,
This ready minute ſees thy will perform'd;
From *Syphax* knocks his chains; and I myſelf,
Even in his favour, will requeſt the *Romans.*
Oh, thou haſt ſmil'd my paſſions into peace!
So while conflicting winds embroil'd the ſeas,
In perfect bloom, warm with immortal blood,
Young *Venus* rear'd her o'er the raging flood;
She ſmil'd around, like thine her beauties glow'd;
When ſmooth, in gentle ſwells, the ſurges flow'd;
Sunk, by degrees, into a liquid plain;
And one bright calm ſat trembling on the main.

The End of the Third Act.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

Phoen. HAIL queen of *Maſaeſylia* once again
And fair *Maſſylia* join'd! This riſing day
Saw *Sophoniſba*, from the height of life,

Thrown to the very brink of ſlavery;
State, honours, armies vaniſh'd; nothing left
But her own great unconquerable mind.
And yet, ere evening comes, to larger power
Reſtor'd I ſee my royal friend, and kneel
In grateful homage to the Gods, and her.
Ye powers, what awful changes often mark
The fortunes of the great!

Soph. Phoeniſſa, true;
'Tis awful all, the wonderous work of fate.
But, ah, this ſudden marriage damps my ſoul!
I like it not, that wild precipitance
Of youth, that ardor, that impetuous ſtream
In which his love return'd. At firſt, my friend,
He vainly rag'd with diſappointed love;
And, as the haſty ſtorm ſubſided, then
To ſoftneſs varied, to returning fondneſs,
To ſighs, to tears, to ſupplicating vows;
But all his vows were idle, till at laſt
He ſhook my heart by *Rome*.—To be his queen
Could only ſave me from their horrid power.
And there is madneſs in that thought, enough
In that ſtrong thought alone to make me run
From nature.

Phoen. Was it not auſpicious, madam?
Juſt as we hop'd? juſt as our wiſhes plan'd?
Nor let your ſpirit ſink. Your ſerious hours,
When you behold the *Roman* ravage check'd,
From their enchantment *Maſiniſſa* freed,
And *Carthage* miſtreſs of the world again,
This marriage will approve: then will it riſe
In all its glory, virtuous, wiſe and great,
While happy nations, then deliver'd, join
Their loud acclaim. And, had the bleſt occaſion

Neglected

Neglected flown, where now had been your hopes?
Your liberty? your country? where your all?
Think well of this; you cannot but exult
In what is done.

Soph. So may my hopes ſucceed,
As love alone to *Carthage*, to the public,
Led me a marriage-victim to the temple,
And juſtifies my vows!—Ha! *Syphax* here!
What would his rage with me! *Phoeniſſa* ſtay.
But this one trial more—Heroic truth,
Support me now!

SCENE II.

SYPHAX, SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

Syph. You ſeem to fly me, madam,
To ſhun my gratulations.—Here I come,
To join the general joy; and I, ſure I,
Who have to dotage, have to ruin lov'd you,
Muſt take a tender part in your ſucceſs,
In your recover'd ſtate.

Soph. 'Tis very well.
I thank you, Sir.

Syph. And gentle *Maſiniſſa*,
Say, will he prove a very coming fool?
All pliant, all devoted to your will?
A duteous wretch like *Syphax?*—Ha! not mov'd!
Speak, thou perfidious! canſt thou bear it thus?
With ſuch a ſteady countenance? canſt thou
Here ſee the man thou haſt ſo groſsly wrong'd,
And yet not ſink in ſhame? and yet not ſhake
In every guilty nerve?

Soph. What have I done,
That I ſhould tremble? that I ſhould not dare

To bear thy preſence? Was my heart to blame,
I'd tremble at myſelf, and not at thee,
Proud man! Nor would I live to be aſham'd,
For, of all evils, to the generous, ſhame
Is the moſt deadly pang.—But you behold
My late engagement with a jealous, falſe,
And ſelfiſh eye.

Syphax. Avenging *Juno*, hear!
And canſt thou think to juſtify thyſelf?
I bluſh to hear thee, traitreſs!

Soph. O my ſoul!
Canſt thou hear this, this baſe opprobrious language,
And yet be tamely calm?—Well, for this once
It ſhall be ſo—in pity to thy madneſs—
Impatient ſpirit down!—Yes, *Syphax*, yes,
Yes I will greatly juſtify myſelf;
Even by the conſort of the thundring *Jove*,
Who binds the holy marriage vow, be judg'd.
And every generous heart, not meanly loſt
In little low purſuits, will ſure abſolve me.
But in the tempeſt of the ſoul, when rage,
Loud indignation, unattentive pride,
And jealouſy confound it, how can then
The nobler, *public* ſentiments be heard!
Yet let me tell thee—

Syph. Thou canſt tell me nought.
Away! away! nought but illuſion, falſhood—

Soph. My heart will burſt, in juſtice to myſelf
If here I ſpeak not; tho' thy rage, I know,
Can never be convinc'd, yet ſhall it be
Confounded.—What! muſt I renounce my freedom?
Forgoe the power of doing general good?
Yield myſelf up the ſlave, the barbarous triumph
Of inſolent, enrag'd, inveterate *Rome!*

And

And all for nothing but to grace thy fall?
Nay, ſingly periſh to retain the name,
The empty title of a captive's wife?
For thee; the *Romans* may be mild to thee;
But I, a *Carthaginian*, I whoſe blood
Holds unrelenting enmity to theirs;
Who have myſelf much hurt them, and who live
Only to work them woe; what, what can I
Hope from their vengeance, but the very dregs
Of the worſt fate, the bitterneſs of bondage?
Yet thou, kind man, thou in thy generous love,
Wouldſt have me ſuffer that; be bound to thee,
For that dire end alone, beyond the ſtretch
Of nature and of law.

Syph. Confuſion! Law!
I know the laws permit thee, the groſs laws
That rule the vulgar. I'm a captive, true;
And therefore may'ſt thou plead a ſhameful right
To leave me to my chains—But ſay, thou baſe one!
Ungrateful! ſay, for whom am I a captive?
For whom has battle after battle bled?
For whom my crown, my kingdom, and my all,
Been vilely caſt away? For one, ye Gods!
Who leaves me for the victor, for the foe
I hold in utter endleſs deteſtation.
Fire! fury! hell!—Oh I am richly paid!
But This it is to love a woman—Woman!
The ſource of all diſaſter, all perdition!
Man in himſelf is ſocial, would be happy,
Too happy; but the Gods, to keep him wretched,
Curs'd him with woman! fond, enchanting, ſmooth,
And harmleſs-ſeeming woman; but at heart
All poiſon, ſerpents, tigers, furies, all
That is deſtructive, in one breaſt combined,

And gilded o'er with beauty!

Soph. Hapleſs man!
I pity thee! this madneſs only ſtirs
My boſom to compaſſion, not to rage.
Think as you liſt of our unhappy ſex,
Too much ſubjected to your tyrant force;
Yet know that all, we were not all, at leaſt,
Form'd for your trifles, for your wanton hours.
Our paſſions too can ſometimes ſoar above
The houſhold taſk aſſign'd us, can extend
Beyond the narrow ſphere of families,
And take great ſtates into th' expanded heart,
As well as yours, ye partial to yourſelves!
And this is my ſupport, my joy, my glory;
On theſe great principles, and theſe alone,
I ſtill direct my conduct.

Syph. Falſe as hell!
I loath your ſex! when it pretends to virtue,
You talk of honour, conſcience, patriotiſm!
A female patriot!—Vanity!—Abſurd!
Even doating dull credulity would laugh
To hear you prate. Did ever woman yet
Form any better purpoſe in her thought,
Than how to pleaſe her pride or wanton will?
Thoſe are the principles on which you act,
Yes, thoſe alone.

Soph. Muſt I then, muſt I, *Syphax*,
Give thee a bitter proof of what I ſay?
I would not ſeem to heighten thy diſtreſs,
Not in the leaſt inſult thee. Thou art fallen,
So fate ſevere has will'd it, fallen by me;
I therefore have been patient: from another,
Such language, ſuch indignity, had fir'd
My ſoul to madneſs. But ſince driven ſo far,

I muſt

I muſt remind thy blind injurious rage
Of our unhappy marriage.—
Syph. Dar'ſt thou name it,
After ſuch perfidy?
Soph. Allow me, *Syphax*,
Hear me but once! If what I here declare
Shines not with reaſon, and the cleareſt truth;
May I be baſe, deſpis'd and dumb for ever!
I pray thee think, when unpropitious *Hymen*
Our hands united, how I ſtood engag'd.
Was I not blooming in the pride of youth,
And youthful hopes; ſunk in a paſſion tod,
Which few reſign? Yet then I married thee,
Becauſe to *Carthage* deem'd a ſtronger friend;
For that alone. On theſe conditions, ſay,
Didſt thou not take me, court me to thy throne?
Have I deceiv'd thee ſince? Have I diſſembled?
To gain one purpoſe, e'er pretended what
I never felt? Thou canſt not ſay I have.
And if that principle, which then inſpir'd
My marrying thee, was right, it cannot now
Be wrong: nay, ſince my native city wants:
Aſſiſtance more, and ſinking calls for aid,
'Tis ſtill more right——
Syph. This reaſoning is inſult!
Soph. I'm ſorry that thou doſt oblige me to it.
Then in a word take my full-open'd ſoul.
All love, but that of *Carthage*, I deſpiſe.
I formerly to *Maſiniſſa* thee
Preferr'd not, nor to thee now *Maſiniſſa*,
But *Carthage* to you both. And if preferring
Thouſands to one, a whole collected people,
All nature's tenderneſs, whate'er is ſacred,
The liberty, the welfare of a ſtate,

To one man's frantic happineſs, be ſhame;
Here, *Syphax*, I invoke it on my head!
This ſet aſide; I careleſs of myſelf,
And ſcorning proſperous ſtate, had ſtill been thine,
In all the depth of miſery proudly thine!
But ſince the public good, the law ſupreme,
Forbids it; I will leave thee with a kingdom,
The ſame I found thee, or not reign myſelf.
Alas! I ſee thee hurt—Why came'ſt thou here,
Thus to inflame thee more?
Syph. Why, ſorcereſs? why?
Thou complication of all deadly miſchief!
Thou lying, ſoothing, ſpecious, charming fury;
I'll tell thee why—To breathe my great revenge;
To throw this load of burning madneſs from me;
To ſtab thee!———
Soph. Ha!———
Syph. —And, ſpringing from thy heart,
To quench me with thy blood!
[*Phoeniſſa interpoſes.*]
Soph. Off, give me way!
Phoeniſſa; tempt not thou his brutal rage.
Me, me, he dares not murder. If he dares,
Here let his fury ſtrike; for I dare die.
What holds thy trembling hand?
Phoen. Guards!
Soph. Seize the king.
But look you treat him well, with all the ſtate
His dignity demands.
Syph. That care from thee
Is worſe than death—The *Roman* trumpets!—Ha!
Now I bethink me, *Rome* will do me juſtice.
Yes, I ſhall ſee thee walk the ſlave of *Rome*,
Forget my wrongs, and glut me with the ſight.

Be that my beſt revenge.

Soph. Inhuman! that,
If there is death in *Afric*, ſhall not be.

SCENE III.

LAELIUS, SYPHAX.

Lael. Syphax! alas, how fallen! how chang'd! from what
I here beheld thee once in pomp, and ſplendor,
At that illuſtrious interview, when *Rome*
And *Carthage* met beneath this very roof,
Their two great generals, *Aſdrubal* and *Scipio*,
To court thy friendſhip. Of the ſame repaſt
Both gracefully partook, and both reclin'd
On the ſame couch: for perſonal diſtaſte
And hatred ſeldom burn between the brave.
Then the ſuperior virtues of the *Roman*
Gain'd all thy heart. Even *Aſdrubal* himſelf,
With admiration ſtruck and juſt deſpair,
Own'd him as powerful at the ſocial feaſt
As in the battle. This thou may'ſt remember,
And how thy faith was given before the Gods,
And ſworn and ſeal'd to *Scipio*; yet how falſe
Thou ſince haſt prov'd, I need not now recount:
But let thy ſufferings for thy guilt atone,
The captive for the king. A *Roman* tongue
Scorns to purſue the triumph of the ſword,
With mean upbraidings.

Syph. Laelius, 'tis too true.
Curſe on the cauſe!

Lael. But where is *Maſiniſſa?*
The brave young victor, the *Numidian Roman!*
Where is he? that my joy, my glad applauſe,

From envy pure, may hail his happy ſtate.
Why that contemptuous ſmile?
Syph. Too credulous *Roman!*
I ſmile to think how this brave *Maſiniſſa*,
This *Rome*-devoted hero, muſt ſtill more
Attract thy praiſes, by a late exploit,
In every thing ſucceſsful.
Lael. What is this?
Theſe public ſhouts? A ſtrange unuſual joy
O'er all the captive city blazes wide.
What wanton riot reigns to-night in *Cirtha?*
Within theſe conquer'd walls?
Syph. This, *Laelius*, is
A night of triumph o'er my conqueror,
O'er *Maſiniſſa.*
Lael. Maſiniſſa! How?
Syph. Why, he to-night is married to my queen.
Lael. Impoſſible!———
Syph. Yes, ſhe, the fury! ſhe,
Who put the nuptial torch into my hand,
That ſet my throne, my palace, and my kingdom,
All in a blaze; ſhe now has ſeiz'd on him,
Will turn him ſoon from *Rome*—I know her power.
Her lips diſtil unconquerable poiſon.
O glorious thought!—her arts, her fatal love
Will cruſh him deep beneath the mighty ruins
Of falling *Carthage.*
Lael. Can it be? Amazement!
Syph. Nay learn it from himſelf—He comes—Away!
Ye furies ſnatch me from his ſight! For hell,
Its tortures all are gentle to the preſence
Of a triumphant rival?
Lael. What is man?

SCENE

SCENE IV.

MASANISSA, LAELIUS.

Maſ. Thou more than partner of this glorious day,
Which has from *Carthage* torn her chief ſupport,
And tottering left her, I rejoice to ſee thee———
To *Cirtha* welcome, *Laelius*—Thy brave legions
Now taſte the ſweet repoſe by valor purchas'd:
This city pours refreſhment on their toils.
I order'd *Narva*———

Lael. Thanks to *Maſiniſſa.*
All that is well—But I obſerv'd the king
More looſely guarded than befits the ſtate
Of ſuch a captive. True, indeed, from him
There is not much to fear. The dangerous ſpirit
Is his imperious queen, his *Sophoniſba.*
The pride, the rage of *Carthage* live in her.
How? where is ſhe?

Maſ. She, *Laelius?* in my care.
Think not of her. Ill anſwer for her conduct.

Lael. Yes, if in chains. Till then, believe me, prince,
It were as ſafe to anſwer for the winds,
That their loos'd fury will not rouſe the waves,
Or that their darted lightning will be harmleſs;
As promiſe peace from her.—But why ſo dark?
You ſhift your place, your countenance grows warm.
It is not uſual this in *Maſiniſſa.*
Pray what offence can aſking for the queen,
The *Roman* captive, give?

Maſ. Laelius, no more.
You know my marriage.—*Syphax* has been buſy—
It is unkind to dally with my paſſion.

Lael. Ah *Maſiniſſa!* was it then for this,

Thy

Thy hurry hither from the recent battle?
Is the firſt inſtance of the *Roman* bounty
Thus, thus abus'd? They give thee back thy kingdom;
And in return are of their captive robb'd;
Of all they valued, *Sophoniſba.*———
Maſ. Robb'd!
How, *Laelius?* Robb'd!
Lael Yes, *Maſiniſſa*, robb'd
What is it elſe? But I, this very night,
Will here aſſert the majeſty of *Rome*,
And, mark me, tear her from the nuptial bed.
Maſ. Oh Gods! oh patience! As ſoon, fiery *Roman!*
As ſoon thy rage might from her azure ſphere
Tear yonder moon—The man who ſeizes her,
Shall ſet his foot firſt on my bleeding heart.
Of that be ſure.—And is thus you treat
Your firm allies? thus kings in friendſhip with you?
Of human paſſions ſtrip them?—Slaves indeed!
If thus deny'd the common privilege
Of nature, what the weakeſt creatures claim,
A right to what they love.
Lael. Out! out! For ſhame!
This paſſion makes thee blind. Here is a war,
Which deſolates the nations, has almoſt
Laid waſte the world. How many widows, orphans,
And tender virgins weep its rage in *Rome!*
Even her great ſenate droops; her nobles fail;
Nature herſelf, by frequent prodigies,
Seems at this havoc of her works to ſicken:
And our *Auſonian* plains are now become
A horror to the ſight: at each ſad ſtep,
Remembrance weeps. Yet her, the greateſt prize
It hitherto has yielded: her, whoſe charms
Are only turn'd to whet its cruel point;

Thou

Thou to thy wedded breaſt haſt wildly taken,
Haſt purchas'd thee her beauties by the blood
Of thy protecting friends; and on a throne
Set her, this day recovered by their arms.
Canſt thou do this, and call thyſelf a king
Ally'd to *Rome?* Raſh youth, the *Roman* people,
To kings, who dare offend them thus, vouchſafe not
The honour of their friendſhip.—Thou haſt thrown
That glory from thee, and muſt now be taught
To dread their wrath.

Maſ. Be not ſo haughty, *Laelius.*
It ſcarce becomes the gentle *Scipio*'s friend;
Suits not thy character, the tender manners
I ſtill have mark'd in thee. I honour *Rome;*
But honour too myſelf, my vows, my queen:
Nor will, nor can I tamely hear thee threaten
To ſeize her like a ſlave.

Lael. I will be calm.
This thy raſh deed, this unexpected ſhock,
Such a peculiar injury to me,
Thy friend and fellow-ſoldier, has perhaps
Snatch'd me too far. For haſt thou not diſhonour'd,
By this laſt action, a ſucceſsful war,
Our common charge, truſted to us by *Scipio?*

Maſ. Our charge from *Scipio* was to conquer *Syphax,*
Not by a barbarous triumph to inſult
His beauteous queen. Was *Sophoniſba* made
To follow weeping a proud victor's chariot?
She, the firſt miſtreſs of my heart, who ſtill
Reigns in my ſoul, and there will reign for ever.
At ſuch a ſight, the warrior's eye might wet
His burning cheek; and all the *Roman* matrons,
Who line'd the laurel'd way, aſham'd, and ſad,
Turn from a captive brighter than themſelves.

But

But *Scipio* will be milder.

Lael. I diſdain
This thy ſurmiſe, and give it up to *Scipio.*
Theſe paſſions are not comely.—Here to-morrow
Comes the proconſul. Mean time, *Maſiniſſa,*
Ah, harden not thyſelf in flattering hope!
Scipio is mild, but ſteady.—Ha! the queen.
I think ſhe hates a *Roman*—and will leave thee.

SCENE V.

SOPHONISBA, MASINISSA.

Soph. Was not that *Roman Laelius,* as I enter'd,
Who parted gloomy hence?

Maſ. Madam, the ſame.

Soph. Unhappy *Afric!* ſince theſe haughty *Romans*
Have in this lordly manner trod thy courts.
I read his freſh reproaches in thy face;
The leſſon'd pupil in thy fallen look,
In that forc'd ſmile, which ſickens on thy cheek.

Maſ. Oh ſay not ſo, thou rapture of my ſoul!
For while I fondly gaze upon thy charms,
I ſmile as joyous as the ſun in *May:*
Nor can my heart, by thee poſſeſt, retain
One painful thought.

Soph. Nay, tell me, *Maſiniſſa:*
How feels their tyranny, when 'tis brought home?
When, lawleſs grown, it touches what is dear?
Pomp for a while may dazzle thoughtleſs man,
Falſe glory blind him; but there is a time,
When even the ſlave in heart will ſpurn his chains,
Nor know ſubmiſſion more.—What ſaid the tyrant?

Maſ. His diſappointment for a moment only
Burſt in vain paſſion, and—

Soph.

Soph. You ſtood abaſh'd;
You bore his threats, and tamely-ſilent heard him,
Heard the fierce *Roman* mark me for his triumph.
Oh meanneſs!
Maſ. Baniſh that unkind ſuſpicion.
The thought enflam'd my ſoul. I vow'd my life,
My laſt *Maſſylian* to the ſword, ere he
Should touch thy freedom with the leaſt diſhonour.
But that from *Scipio*—
Soph. Scipio!
Maſ. That from him——
Soph. I tell thee, *Maſiniſſa*, if from him
You gain my freedom, from myſelf conceal it.
I ſhall diſdain ſuch freedom.
Maſ Sophoniſba!
Thou all my heart holds precious! doubt no more.
Nor *Rome*, nor *Scipio*, nor a world combin'd
Shall tear thee from me; till outſtretch'd I lye
A nameleſs corpſe!
Soph. If thy protection fails,
Of this at leaſt be ſure, be very ſure,
To give me timely death.
Maſ. Ceaſe thus to talk
Of death, of *Romans*, of unkind ambition.
My ſofter thoughts theſe rugged themes refuſe,
And turn alone to love.—All, all, but thee,
All nature is a paſſing dream to me.
Fix'd in my view, thou doſt for ever ſhine,
Thy form forth-beaming from the ſoul divine.
A ſpirit thine, which mortals might adore;
Deſpiſing love, and thence creating more.
Thou the high paſſions, I the tender prove,
Thy heart was form'd for glory, mine for love.

The End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V. SCENE I.

MASINISSA, NARVA.

Maſ. HAIL to the joyous day! With purple clouds
The whole horizon glows. The breezy *Spring*
Stands looſely floating on the mountain-top,
And deals her ſweets around. The ſun too ſeems,
As conſcious of my joy, with brighter beams
To gild the happy world; and all things ſmile,
Like *Sophoniſba.* Love and friendſhip ſure
Have mark'd this day with all their choiceſt bleſſings,
Oh *Sophoniſba*'s mine! and *Scipio* comes!

Narv. My lord, the trumpets ſpeak his near approach.

Maſ. I want his ſecret audience—Leave us, *Narva.*

SCENE II.

SCIPIO, MASINISSA.

Maſ. Scipio! more welcome than my tongue can ſpeak!
Oh greatly, dearly welcome!

Scip. Maſiniſſa!
My heart beats back thy joy—A happy friend,
Rais'd by his prudence, fortitude, and valor,
O'er all his foes; and on his native throne,
Amidſt his reſcu'd ſhouting ſubjects, ſet:
Say, can the Gods in laviſh bounty give
A ſight more pleaſing?

Maſ. My great friend! and patron!
It was thy timely, thy reſtoring aid
That brought me from the fearful deſart-life,

To

To live again in ſtate, and purple ſplendor.
Thy friendſhip arm'd me with the ſtrength of *Rome*,
And now I wield the ſceptre of my fathers,
See my dear people from the tyrant's ſcourge,
From *Syphax* freed; I hear their glad applauſes;
And, to complete my happineſs, have gain'd
A friend worth all. O gratitude, eſteem,
And love like mine, with what divine delight
Ye fill the heart!

Scip. Heroic youth! thy virtue
Has earn'd whate'er thy fortune can beſtow.
It was thy patience, *Maſiniſſa*, patience,
A champion clad in ſteel, that in the waſte
Attended ſtill thy ſtep, and ſav'd my friend
For better days. What cannot patience do!
A great deſign is ſeldom ſnatch'd at once;
'Tis patience heaves it on. From ſavage nature,
'Tis patience that has built up human life,
The nurſe of arts! and *Rome* exalts her head
An everlaſting monument of patience.

Maſ. If I have that, or any virtue, *Scipio*,
'Tis copy'd all from thee.

Scip. No, *Maſiniſſa*,
'Tis all unborrow'd, the ſpontaneous growth
Of nature in thy breaſt—Friendſhip for once
Muſt, tho' thou bluſheſt, wear a liberal tongue;
Muſt tell thee, noble youth, that long experience
In councils, battles, many a hard event,
Has found thee ſtill ſo conſtant, ſo ſincere,
So wiſe, ſo brave, ſo generous, ſo humane,
So well attemper'd, and ſo fitly turn'd
For what is either great or good in life,
As caſts diſtinguiſh'd honour on thy country;
And cannot but endear thee to the *Romans*.

For

For me, I think my labours all repaid,
My wars in *Afric*. *Maſiniſſa*'s friendſhip
Rewards them all. Be that my deareſt triumph,
To have aſſiſted thy forlorn eſtate,
And lent a happy hand in raiſing thee
To thy paternal throne, uſurp'd by *Syphax*.
The greateſt ſervice could be done my country,
Diſtracted *Afric*, and mankind in general,
Was thus to aid thy worth. To put the power
Of ſovereign rule into the good man's hand,
Is giving peace and happineſs to millions.
But has my friend, ſince late we parted armies,
Since he with *Laelius* acted ſuch a brave,
Auſpicious part againſt the common foe;
Has he been blameleſs quite? has he conſidered
How pleaſure often on the youthful heart,
Beneath the roſy ſoft diſguiſe of love,
(All ſweetneſs, ſmiles, and ſeeming innocence),
Steals unperceiv'd, and lays the victor low?
I would not, cannot, put thee to the pain—
—It pains me deeper—of the leaſt reproach.—
Let thy too faithful memory ſupply
The reſt. [*Pauſing.*]
Thy ſilence, that dejected look,
That honeſt colour flushing o'er thy cheek,
Impart thy better ſoul.
Maſ. Oh my good lord!
Oh *Scipio!* Love has ſeiz'd me, tyrant love
Inthrals my ſoul. I am undone by love!
Scip. And art thou then to ruin reconciled?
Tamed to deſtruction! wilt thou be undone?
Reſign the towering thought? the vaſt deſign,
With future glories big? the warrior's wreath?
The praiſe of ſenates? an applauding world?

All

All for a ſigh? all for a ſoft embrace?
For a gay tranſient fancy, *Maſiniſſa?*
For ſhame, my friend! for honour's ſake, for virtue's!
Sit not with folded arms, deſpairing, weak,
Like a ſick virgin ſighing to the gale,
Till ſure deſtruction comes—Alas, how chang'd
From him, the man I lov'd!

Maſ. How chang'd indeed!
The time has been, when fir'd from *Scipio*'s tongue,
My ſoul had mounted in a flame with his.—
Where is ambition flown? Hopeleſs attempt!
Can love like mine be quell'd? Can I forget
What ſtill poſſeſſes, charms my thoughts for ever?
Throw ſcornful from me what I hold moſt dear?
Not feel the force of excellence? to joy
Be dead? and undelighted with delight?
Hold, let me think a moment—no! no! no!
I am unequal to thy virtue, *Scipio!*

Scip. Fie, *Maſiniſſa*, fie! By heavens! I bluſh
At thy dejection, this degenerate language.
What! periſh for a woman! Ruin all,
All the fair deeds which an admiring world
Hopes from thy riper years, only to ſooth
A ſtubborn fancy, a luxurious will?
How muſt it, think you, ſound in future ſtory:
Young *Maſiniſſa* was a virtuous prince,
And *Afric* ſmiled beneath his early ray;
But that a *Carthaginian* captive came,
By whom untimely in the common fate
Of love he fell. The wiſe will ſcorn the page,
And all thy praiſe be ſome fond maid exclaiming,
Where are thoſe lovers now? O rather, rather,
Had I ne'er ſeen the vital light of heaven,
Than like the vulgar live, and like them die!

Ambition

Ambition ſickens at the very thought.——
To puff, and buſtle here from day to day,
Loſt in the paſſions of inglorious life,
Joys which the careleſs brutes poſſeſs above us.
And when ſome years, each duller than another,
Are thus elaps'd, in nauſeous pangs to die;
And paſs away, like thoſe forgotten things,
That ſoon became as they had never been.

Maſ. And am I dead to this?

Scip. The Gods, my friend,
Who train up heroes in misfortune's ſchool,
Have ſhook thee with adverſity, with each
Illuſtrious evil, that can raiſe, expand,
And fortify the mind. Thy rooted worth
Has ſtood theſe wintry blaſts, grown ſtronger by them.
Shall then in proſperous times, while all is mild,
All vernal, fair; and glory blows around thee;
Shall then the *dead Serene* of pleaſure come,
Aud lay thy faded honours in the duſt?

Maſ. O gentle *Scipio*! ſpare me, ſpare my weakneſs.

Scip. Remember *Hannibal*—A ſignal proof,
A freſh example of deſtructive pleaſure
He was the dread of nations, once of *Rome!*
When from *Bellona*'s boſom, nurs'd in camps,
And hard with toil, he down the rugged *Alps*
Ruſh'd like a torrent over *Italy*;
Unconquer'd, till the looſe delights of *Capua*
Sunk his victorious arm, his genius broke,
Perfum'd, and made a lover of the hero.
Lo! now he droops in *Bruttium*, fear'd no more,
Remember him; and yet reſume thy ſpirit,
Ere it be quite diſſolved.

Maſ. Shall *Scipio* ſtoop,
Thus to regard, to teach me wiſdom thus;

And

And yet a ſtupid anguiſh at my heart
Repel whate'er he ſays?—But why, my friend,
Why ſhould we kill the beſt of paſſions, Love?
It aids the hero, bids ambition riſe
To nobler heights, inſpires immortal deeds,
Even ſoftens brutes, and adds a grace to virtue.
Scip. There is a holy tenderneſs indeed,
A virtuous, ſocial, ſympathetic love,
That binds, ſupports, and ſweetens human life.
But is thy paſſion ſuch?—Liſt, *Maſiniſſa*,
While I the hardeſt office of a friend
Diſcharge; and, with a neceſſary hand,
A hand, tho' harſh at preſent, truly tender,
I paint this paſſion. And if then thou ſtill
Are bent to ſooth it, I muſt ſighing leave thee
To what the Gods think fit.
Maſ. O never, *Scipio!*
O never leave me to myſelf! Speak on.
I dread, and yet deſire thy friendly hand.
Scip. I hope that *Maſiniſſa* needs not now
Be told, how much his happineſs is mine;
With what a warm benevolence I'd ſpring
To raiſe, confirm it, to prevent his wiſhes
In every right purſuit!—But while he rages,
Burns in a fever, ſhall I let him quaff
Delicious poiſon for a cooling draught,
In fooliſh pity to his thirſt? ſhall I
Let a ſwift flame conſume him as he ſleeps,
Becauſe his dreams are gay? ſhall I indulge
A frenzy flaſh'd from an infectious eye?
A ſudden impulſe unapprov'd by reaſon?
Nay, by thy cool delib'rate thought condemn'd?
Reſolv'd againſt?—A paſſion for a woman,
Who has abus'd thee baſely? left thy youth,

Thy

Thy love as ſweet, as tender as the ſpring,
The blooming hero for the hoary tyrant?
And now who makes thy ſheltering arms alone
Her laſt retreat, to ſave her from the vengeance,
Which even her very perfidy to thee
Has brought upon her head?—Nor is this all.—
A woman who will ply her deepeſt arts,
(Ah too prevailing, as appears already),
Will never reſt till *Syphax*'s fate is thine;
Till friendſhip weeping flies, we join no more
In glorious deeds, and thou fall off from *Rome*?
I could add too, that there is ſomething cruel,
Inhuman in thy paſſion. Does not *Syphax*,
While thou rejoiceſt, die? The generous heart
Should ſcorn a pleaſure which gives others pain.
If this, my friend, all this conſider'd deep,
Alarm thee not, nor rouſe thy reſolution,
And call the hero from his wanton ſlumber,
Then *Maſiniſſa*'s loſt.

Maſ. Oh, I am pierc'd!
In every thought am pierc'd! 'Tis all too true.—
I would, but can't deny it.—Whither, whither,
Thro' what inchanted wilds have I been wandering?
They ſeem'd *Elyſium*, the delightful plains,
The happy groves of heroes and of lovers:
But the divinity that breathes in thee
Has broke the charm, and I am in a deſart,
Far from the land of peace. It was but lately
That a pure joyous calm o'erſpread my ſoul,
And reaſon turned my paſſions into bliſs;
When love come hurrying in, and with raſh hand
Mix'd them delirious, till they now ferment
To miſery.—There is no reaſoning down
This deep, deep anguiſh! this continual pang!

A thou-

A thouſand things! whene'er my raptur'd thought
Runs back a little—But I will not think.—
And yet I muſt.—Oh Gods! that I could loſe
What a few hours have on my memory grav'd
In adamant.

Scip. But one ſtrong effort more,
And the fair field is thine—A conqueſt far
Excelling that o'er *Syphax*. What remains,
Since now thy madneſs to thyſelf appears,
But an immediate manly reſolution,
To ſhake off this effeminate diſeaſe;
Theſe ſoft ideas, which ſeduce thy ſoul,
Make it all idle, weak, inglorious, wild,
A ſcene of dreams; to give them to the winds,
And be my former friend, thyſelf again?
I joy to find thee touch'd by generous motives,
And that I need not bid thee recollect,
Whoſe awful property thou haſt uſurp'd;
Need not aſſure thee that the *Roman* people,
The ſenators of *Rome* will never ſuffer
A dangerous woman, their devoted foe,
A woman, whoſe irrefragable ſpirit
Has in great part ſuſtain'd the bloody war,
Whoſe charms corrupted *Syphax* from their ſide,
To ruin thee too, taint thy faithful breaſt,
And kindle future war. No, fate itſelf
Is not more ſteady to the right than they.
And, where the public good but ſeems concern'd,
No motive their impenetrable hearts,
Nor fear nor tenderneſs, can touch: ſuch is
The ſpirit that has rais'd Imperial *Rome*.

Maſ. Ah killing truth!—But I have promis'd, *Scipio!*
Have ſworn to ſave her from the *Roman* power.
My plighted faith is paſs'd, my hand is given.

And

And, by the conſcious Gods! who mark'd my vows,
The whole united world ſhall never have her.
For I will die a thouſand thouſand deaths,
With all *Maſſylia* in one field expire;
Ere to the loweſt wretch, much leſs to her
I love, to *Sophoniſba*, to my queen,
I violate my word.

Scip. My heart approves
Thy reſolution, thy determin'd honour.
For ever ſacred be thy word, and oath.
But, thus divided, how to keep thy faith
At once to *Rome* and *Sophoniſba*; how
To ſave her from our chains, and yet thyſelf
From greater bondage; this thy ſecret thought
Can beſt inform thee.

Maſ. Agony! diſtraction!
Theſe wilful tears! Oh look not on me, *Scipio*!
For I'm a child again.

Scip. Thy tears are no reproach.
Tears oft look graceful on the manly cheek.
The Cruel cannot weep. Lo! Friendſhip's eye
Gives thee the drop it would refuſe itſelf.
I know 'tis hard, wounds every bleeding nerve
About thy heart, thus to tear off thy paſſion.
But for that very reaſon, *Maſiniſſa*,
'Tis hop'd from thee. The harder, thence reſults
The greater glory.—Why ſhould we pretend
To conquer nations, and to rule mankind,
Pre-eminent in glory, place, and power,
While ſlaves at heart? while by fantaſtic turns
Our frantic paſſions reign? This very thought
Should turn our pomp to ſhame, diſgrace our triumphs;
And when the ſhouts of millions rend our ears,
Whiſper reproach.—O ye celeſtial powers!

What

What is it, in a torrent of ſucceſs,
To overflow the world; if by the ſtream
Our own enfeebled minds are born away
From reaſon and from virtue? Real glory
Springs from the ſilent conqueſt of ourſelves;
And without that the conqueror is nought
But the firſt ſlave.—Then rouſe thee, *Maſiniſſa!*
Nor in one weakneſs all thy virtues loſe;
And, oh, beware of long, of vain repentance!

Maſ. Well! well! no more.—It is but dying too!

SCENE III.

SCIPIO *alone*

I wiſh I have not urged the truth to rigor!
There is a time when virtue grows ſevere,
Too much for nature, and almoſt even cruel.

SCENE IV.

SCIPIO, LAELIUS.

Scip. Poor *Maſiniſſa*, *Laelius*, is undone;
Betwixt his paſſion and his reaſon toſt
In miſerable conflict.

Lael. Entering, *Scipio*,
He ſhot athwart me, nor vouchſaf'd one look.
Hung on his clouded brow I mark'd deſpair,
And his eyes glaring with ſome dire reſolve.
Faſt o'er his cheek too ran the haſty tear.
It were great pity that he ſhould be loſt.

Scip. By heavens! to loſe him were a ſhock, as if
I loſt thee, *Laelius*, loſt my deareſt brother.
Bound up in friendſhip from our infant years,
A thouſand lovely qualities endear him,

Only too warm of heart.

Lael. What ſhall be done?

Scip. Here let it reſt, 'till time abates his paſſion.
Nature is nature, *Laelius*, let the wiſe
Say what they pleaſe. But now perhaps he dies.—
Haſte! haſte! and give him hope.—I have not time
To tell thee what.—Thy prudence will direct—
Whatever is conſiſtent with my honour,
My duty to the public, and my friendſhip
To him himſelf, ſay, promiſe, ſhall be done.
I hope returning reaſon will prevent
Our farther care.

Lael. I fly with joy.

Scip. His life
Not only ſave, but *Sophoniſba*'s too:
For both I fear are in this paſſion mixt.

Lael. It ſhall be done.

SCENE V.

SCIPIO *alone*

If friendſhip ſuffers thus;
When love pours in his added violence,
What are the pangs which *Maſiniſſa* feels!

SCENE VI.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

Soph. Yes, *Maſiniſſa* loves me—Heavens! how fond!
But yet I know not what hangs on my ſpirit,
A diſmal boding: for this fatal *Scipio*,
I dread his virtues; this prevailing *Roman*
Even now perhaps deludes the generous king,
Fires his ambition with miſtaken glory,

Demands

Demands me from him; for full well he knows,
That, while I live, I muſt intend their ruin.
Phoen. Madam, theſe fears—
Soph. And yet it cannot be.
Can *Scipio*, whom even hoſtile fame proclaims
Of perfect honour, and of poliſh'd manners,
Smooth, artful, winning, moderate, and wiſe,
Make ſuch a wild demand? Or, if he could,
Can *Maſiniſſa* grant it? give his queen,
Whom love and honour bind him to protect,
Yield her a captive to triumphant *Rome?*
'Tis baſeneſs to ſuſpect it; 'tis inhuman.
What then remains?—Suppoſe they ſhould reſolve
By right of war to ſeize me for their prize—
Ay, there it kills?—What can his ſingle arm
Againſt the *Roman* power? that very power
By which he ſtands reſtor'd? Diſtracting thought!
Still o'er my head the rod of bondage hangs.
Shame on my weakneſs.—This poor catching hope,
This tranſient taſte of joy will only more
Imbitter death.
Phoen. A moment will decide.
Madam, till then—
Soph. Would I had dy'd before!
And am I dreaming here? Here! from the *Romans*
Beſeeching I may live to ſwell their triumph?
When my free ſpirit ſhould ere now have join'd
That great aſſembly, thoſe devoted ſhades,
Who ſcorn'd to live till liberty was loſt,
But ere their country fell, abhor'd the light.
Whence this pale ſlave? he trembles with his meſſage.

SCENE VII.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA; *and to them a* SLAVE, *with a letter and poiſon from* MASINISSA.

SLAVE *kneeling.*

This, Madam, from the king, and this.

Soph. Ha!—Stay.

[*Reads the letter.*]

Rejoice, *Phoeniſſa!* Give me joy, my friend!
For here is liberty! my fears are vain.
The hand of *Rome* can never touch me more!
Hail! perfect freedom, hail!

Phoen. How? what? my queen!
Ah! what is this?

[*Pointing to the poiſon.*]

Soph. The firſt of bleſſings, death.

Phoen. Alas! alas! can I rejoice in that?

Soph. Shift not thy colour at the ſound of death;
For death appears not in a dreary light,
Seems not a blank to me, a loſs of all
Thoſe fond ſenſations, thoſe enchanting dreams,
Which cheat a toiling world from day to day,
And from the whole of happineſs they know.
It is to me perfection, glory, triumph.
Nay, fondly would I chuſe it, tho' perſuaded
It were a long dark night, without a morning,
To bondage far prefer it! ſince it is
Deliverance from a world where *Romans* Rule,
Where violence prevails—And timely too—
Before my country falls; before I feel
As many ſtripes, as many chains and deaths,
As there are lives in *Carthage*—Glorious charter,
By which I hold immortal life and freedom.

Come,

Come, let me read thee once again.—And then,
Obey the mandate. [*Reads the letter aloud.*]

MASINISSA to his QUEEN.

The Gods know with what pleaſure I would have kept my faith to Sophoniſba *in another manner. But ſince this fatal bowl alone can deliver thee from the* Romans; *call to mind thy father, thy country, that thou haſt been the wife of two kings; and act up to the dictates of thy own heart. I will not long ſurvive thee.*

Oh, 'tis wond'rous well!
Ye Gods of death who rule the *Stygian* gloom!
Ye who have greatly dy'd! I come! I come!
I die contented, ſince I die a queen,
By *Rome* untouch'd, unſullied by their power;
So much their terror that I muſt not live.
And thou, go tell the king, if this is all
The nuptial preſent he can ſend his bride,
I thank him for it—But that death had worn
An eaſier face, before I truſted him.
Add, hither had he come, I could have taught
Him how to die.—I linger not, remember,
I ſtand not ſhivering on the brink of life;
And, but theſe votive drops, which grateful thus
[*Taking them from the poiſon.*]
To *Jove* the high *Deliverer* I ſhed,
Aſſure him that I drank it, drank it all;
With an unalter'd ſmile—Away.
[*Drinks.*]

SCENE VIII.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA.

Soph. My friend!
In tears, my friend! Diſhonour not my death
With womaniſh complaints. Weep not for me,
Weep for thyſelf, *Phoeniſſa*, for thy country,
But not for me. There is a certain hour,
Which one would wiſh all undiſturb'd and bright,
No care, no ſorrow, no dejected paſſions?
And that is when we die, when hence we go,
Ne'er to be ſeen again; then let us ſpread
A bold exalted wing, and the laſt voice
We hear, be that of wonder and applauſe.
Phoen. Who with ſuch virtue wiſhes not to die!
Soph. And is the ſacred moment then ſo near?
The moment, when yon ſun, thoſe heavens, this earth,
Hateful to me, polluted by the *Romans*,
And all the buſy ſlaviſh race of men,
Shall ſink at once; and ſtrait another ſtate,
New ſcenes, new joys, new faculties, new wonders,
Riſe on a ſudden round: but this the Gods
In clouds and horror wrap, or none would live.
Oh to be there!—my breaſt begins to burn;
My tainted heart grows ſick.—Ah me! *Phoeniſſa*,
How many virgins, infants, tender wretches,
Muſt feel theſe pangs, ere *Carthage* is no more!
Soft—lead me to my couch—My ſhivering limbs,
Do this laſt office, and then reſt for ever.
I pray thee weep not, pierce me not with groans.
The king too here—Nay then my death is full!

SCENE

SCENE IX.

SOPHONISBA, PHOENISSA, MASINISSA, LAELIUS, NARVA.

Maſ. Has *Sophoniſba* drank this curſed bowl?
Oh horror! horror! what a ſight is here!
Soph. Had I not drank it, *Maſiniſſa*, then
I had deſerved it.
Maſ. Exquiſite diſtreſs!
Oh bitter, bitter fate! and this laſt hope
Compleats my woe.
Soph. When will theſe ears be deaf
To miſery's complaint? Theſe eyes be blind
To miſchief wrought by *Rome?*
Maſ. Too ſoon! too ſoon!——
Ah, why ſo haſty? But a little while
Hadſt thou delay'd this horrid draught; I then
Had been as happy, as I now am wretched!
Soph. What means this talk of hope? of coward waiting?
Maſ. What have I done? Oh heavens! I cannot think
On my raſh deed!—But while I talk, ſhe dies!
And how? what? where am I then?—Say, canſt thou
Forgive me, *Sophoniſba?*
Soph. Yes, and more,
More than forgive thee, thank thee, *Maſiniſſa.*
Hadſt thou been weak, and dally'd with my freedom,
Till by proud *Rome* enſlav'd; that injury
I never had forgiven.
Maſ. I came with life!
Lælius and I from *Scipio* haſted thither;
But death was here before us—this vile poiſon!

Soph. With life!—There was ſome merit in the poiſon;
But this deſtroys it all.—And couldſt thou think
Me mean enough to take it?—Oh! *Phoeniſſa*,
This mortal toil is almoſt at an end.—
Receive my parting ſoul.

Phoen. Alas, my queen!

Maſ. Dies! dies! and ſcorns me!——Mercy! *Sophoniſba!*
Grant one forgiving look, while yet thou canſt;
Or death itſelf, the grave cannot relieve me;
But with the furies join'd, my frantic ghoſt
Will howl for ever.—Quivering! and pale!
Have I done this?

Soph. But for *Rome*
We might have been moſt happy.—I conjure thee
Be mild to *Syphax*; for my ſake regard him,
And let thy rage againſt him die with me,
Farewell!—'Tis done!—O never, never, *Carthage*,
Shall I behold thee more!

[*Dies.*]

Maſ. Dead! dead! oh dead!
Is there no death for me?

[*Snatches* Laelius's *ſword to ſtab himſelf.*]

Lael. Hold, *Maſiniſſa!*

Maſ. And wouldſt thou make a coward of me, *Laelius?*
Have me ſurvive that murder'd excellence?
Did ſhe not ſtir? Ha! Who has ſhock'd my brain!
It whirls, it blazes.—Was it thou, old man?

Narv. Alas! alas!—good *Maſiniſſa*, ſoftly!
Let me conduct thee to thy couch.

Maſ. The grave
Shall be my couch.—Ye cannot make me live!

Ye

Ye ſtrive in vain!—Off!—croud not thus around me!
For I will hear, ſee, think no more!—Thou ſun,
With-hold thy hated beams! And all I want
Of thee, kind earth, is an immediate grave!
Ay, there ſhe lyes!—Why to that pallid ſweetneſs
Cannot I, Nature! lay my lips, and die!
[*Throws himſelf beſide her.*]

Lael. See there the ruins of the noble mind,
When from calm reaſon paſſion tears the ſway.
What pity ſhe ſhould periſh!—Cruel war,
'Tis not the leaſt misfortune in thy train,
That oft, by thee, the brave deſtroy the brave.
She had a *Roman* ſoul; for every one
Who loves, like her, his country, is a *Roman.*
Whether on *Afric*'s ſandy plains he glows,
Or lives untamed among *Riphaean* ſnows?
If generous liberty the breaſt inflame,
The gloomy *Lybian* then deſerves that name:
And, warm with freedom under frozen ſkies,
In fartheſt *Britain Romans* yet may riſe.

The End of the Fifth Act.

EPILOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mrs. *CIBBER.*

NOW, I'm afraid, the modeſt taſte in vogue
Demands a ſtrong high-ſeaſon'd epilogue.
Elſe might ſome ſilly ſoul take pity's part,
And odious virtue ſink into the heart.
Our ſqueamiſh author ſcruples this proceeding;
He ſays it hurts ſound morals, and good breeding:
Nor Sophoniſba *would he here produce,*
A glaring medal of no private uſe.
Ladies, he bid me ſay, behold your Cato.
What tho' no Stoic *ſhe, nor read in* Plato?
Yet ſure ſhe offer'd, for her country's ſake,
A ſacrifice, which Cato *could not make——*
—Already, now, theſe wicked men are ſneering,
Some wreſting what one ſays, and others leering.
I vow they have not force for—public ſpirit.
That, ladies, muſt be your ſuperior merit.
Mercy forbid! we ſhould lay down our lives;
Like theſe old, Punic, *barbarous heathen wives*
Spare Chriſtian *blood.—But ſure the devil's in her,*
Who for her country would not loſe a pinner.
—Lard! how could ſuch a creature ſhew her face?
How?—Juſt as you do there—thro' Bruſſels *Lace.*
The Roman *fair, the public in diſtreſs,*
Gave up the deareſt ornaments of dreſs.
How much more cheaply might you gain applauſe?
—One yard of Ribban *and two ells of* Gauſe.

And

EPILOGUE.

And Gauſe *each deep-read critic muſt adore;*
Your Roman *ladies dreſs'd in* Gauſe *all o'er.*
Should you, fair patriots, comes to dreſs ſo thin;
How clear might all your—ſentiments be ſeen.
To foreign looms no longer owe your charms;
Nor make their trade more fatal than their arms.
Each Britiſh *dame, who courts her country's praiſe*
By quitting thoſe outlandiſh *modes, might raiſe*
(Not from yon powder'd band, ſo thin and ſpruce)
Ten able bodied men, for—public uſe.
But now a ſerious word about the play.—
Auſpicious ſmile on this his firſt eſſay;
Ye generous Britons! *your own ſons inſpire;*
Let your applauſes fan their native fire.
Then other Shakeſpear's *yet may rouſe the ſtage,*
And other Otway's *melt another age.*

A NUP-

A

NUPTIAL SONG,

Intended to have been inſerted in the *Fourth Act.*

COME, gentle *Venus!* and aſſuage
A warring world, a bleeding age.
For nature lives beneath thy ray,
The wintry tempeſts haſte away,
A lucid calm inveſts the ſea,
Thy native deep is full of thee;
The flowering earth, where'er you fly,
Is all o'er ſpring, all ſun the ſky.
A genial ſpirit warms the breeze;
Unſeen among the blooming trees,
The feather'd lovers tune their throat,
The deſart growls a ſoften'd note,
Glad o'er the meads the cattle bound,
And love and harmony go round.
But chief into the human heart
You ſtrike the dear delicious dart;
You teach us pleaſing pangs to know,
To languiſh in luxurious woe,
To feel the generous paſſions riſe,
Grow good by gazing, mild by ſighs;
Each happy moment to improve,
And fill the perfect year with love.
Come, thou delight of heaven and earth!
To whom all creatures owe their birth;
Oh come, ſweet ſmiling! tender, come!
And yet prevent our final doom.

For

For long the furious god of war
Has cruſh'd us with his iron car,
Has raged along our ruin'd plains,
Has ſoil'd them with his cruel ſtains,
Has ſunk our youth in endleſs ſleep,
And made the widow'd virgin weep.
Now let him feel thy wonted charms;
Oh take him to thy twining arms!
And, while thy boſom heaves on his,
While deep he prints the humid kiſs,
Ah then! his ſtormy heart controul,
And ſigh thyſelf into his ſoul.

AGAMEMNON.

A

TRAGEDY.

TO HER

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS of WALES.

MADAM,

I Humbly beg leave to put this tragedy under the protection of Your Royal Highneſs; and hope You will condeſcend to accept of it, as a teſtimony of the moſt unfeigned and zealous

lous reſpect, due no leſs to Your amiable virtues, than to your high rank, from,

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS's

Moſt dutiful and moſt

Obedient humble Servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

PRO-

PROLOGUE.

By the AUTAOR of EURYDICE.

Spoken by Mr. QUIN.

WHEN this deciſive night, at length appears,
The night of every author's hopes and fears;
What ſhifts, to bribe applauſe, poor poets try?
In all the forms of wit they court and lye:
Theſe meanly beg it as an alms; and thoſe,
By boaſtful bluſter, dazzle and impoſe.
Nor poorly fearful, nor ſecurely vain,
Ours would, by honeſt ways, that grace obtain;
Would, as a free-born wit, be fairly try'd:
And then—let truth and candor fair decide.
He courts no friend who blindly comes to praiſe;
He dreads no foe—but whom his faults may raiſe.
Indulge a generous pride, that bids him own,
He aims to pleaſe, by noble means alone;
By what may win the judgment, wake the heart;
Inſpiring nature, and directing art;
By ſcenes, ſo wrought, ſo rais'd, as may command
Applauſe, more from the head, than from the hand.
Important is the moral we would teach:
(Oh may this Iſland practiſe what we preach!)
Vice in its firſt approach with care to ſhun;
The wretch who once engages is undone.
Crimes lead to greater crimes, and link ſo ſtreight,
What firſt was accident, at laſt is fate:
Guilt's hapleſs ſervant ſinks into a ſlave;
And virtue's laſt ſad ſtrugglings cannot ſave.
" *As ſuch our fair attempt, we hope to ſee*
" *Our judges,—here at leaſt—from influence free;*
" *One place unbiaſs'd yet by party-rage,—*
" *Where only honour votes,—the* Britiſh *ſtage.*
" *We ask for juſtice, for indulgence ſue;*
" *Our laſt beſt licence muſt proceed from you.*"

The

The Perſons repreſented.

AGAMEMNON,	Mr. Quin.
EGISTHUS,	Mr. Milward.
MELISANDER,	Mr. Cibber.
ARCAS,	Mr. Wright.
ORESTES,	Mr. Green.
TALTHYBIUS, Herald.	Mr. Havard.
Officers, *&c.*	

CLYTEMNESTRA,	Mrs. Porter.
CASSANDRA,	Mrs. Cibber.
ELECTRA,	Miſs Brett.
Attendant of Clytemneſtra,	Mrs. Furnival.
Trojan Captives, *&c.*	

SCENE

The Palace of *Agamemnon*, in MYCENAE.

AGAMEMNON.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA *ſitting in a diſconſolate poſture, and her* ATTENDANT.

Attend. O CLYTEMNESTRA! O my royal miſtreſs!
Can then no comfort ſooth your woes a while?
E'er ſince that flaming ſignal of ſackt *Troy*,
That ſignal fix'd and promis'd by the king,
Was ſeen ſome nights ago, nor food has paſs'd
Your loathing lips, nor ſleep has bleſs'd your eyes.
Or if perhaps a tranſient ſlumber huſh'd
Your ſighs a moment, and reſtrained your tears;
Sudden, you, ſtarting wildly, would exclaim
Of Guilt, *Egiſthus*, *Troy* and *Agamemnon*.
Sure, 'tis too much, my queen.

Clyt. Away! away!
Since my loſt ſtate admits of no relief,
To that ſad comfort of the wretched leave me,
To yield me to my ſorrows.

Attend. Hear me, madam,
Once the dear burden of theſe aged arms!

My

My tender care from life's firſt opening bud!
My joy! my glory! hear your faithful ſervant,
And, let me add, your friend.—In reaſon's eye,
That never judges on a partial view,
Far leſs than your misfortune is your guilt.———
Your guilt—Forgive me, 'tis too harſh a word,
For what deſerves compaſſion more than blame.
I know the treacherous ways by which you ſunk,
From pleaſing peace, to theſe unhappy fears,
This anxious tumult.———
Clyt. Hide me from the view!
All comfort is in vain.—Away!
Attend. Allow me
To plead your injur'd cauſe againſt yourſelf.
When *Agamemnon* led the *Greeks* to *Troy*,
And left you, madam, for the pomp of war,
Left you the pride of *Greece* in full-blown beauty,
The kindeſt mother, and the fondeſt wife;
If fame ſays true, for *Trojan* captives left you——
But that a-part—How did he leave you, ſay?
Afflicted, outraged, as a queen and mother;
Betray'd to *Aulis* with your firſt-born Hope,
The blooming *Iphigenia*, under feint
Of her immediate marriage to *Achilles*;
And there no ſooner at the wind-bound fleet
Arrived, but you beheld her ſpotleſs blood
Stream on the ſully'd altar of *Diana*,
The price of winds, of a dear-purchas'd gale.
To bear them on to *Troy*. Thus pierc'd with grief,
Then fir'd by turns to rage, almoſt to vengeance,
At an ambitious cruel haughty huſband;
While all your paſſions were together mix'd,
And ready for a change; was you not left
In a ſubmiſſive ſoothing lover's power,

Ordain'd

Ordain'd your partner in the ſovereign rule,
O'er *Argos* and *Mycenae*, but to you
As pliant ſtill as *Agamemnon* ſtately?
Clyt. [*riſing.*] Alas! too true! You touch the
ſource of woe.
Why did you leave me, barbarous *Agamemnon?*
Why leave me weeping o'er a murder'd daughter?
Why helpleſs leave me to a troubled mind?
Ah! why yourſelf betray me to a lover?
What arts *Egiſthus* us'd too well I know;
All that can ſoftly ſteal, or gaily charm,
The heart of woman—Hence, dear ſad ideas!
Deſtroyers, hence! And dare you tempt me ſtill,
Perfidious *Sirens!* in that very moment
When your falſe charms have wreckt my peace for ever.
Oh, nature! wherefore, nature, are we form'd
One contradiction? the continual ſport
Of fighting powers? Oh? wherefore haſt thou ſown
Such war within us, ſuch unequal conflict,
Between ſlow reaſon and impetuous paſſion?
Paſſion reſiſtleſs hurries us away,
Ere lingering reaſon to our aid can come,
And to upbraid us then it only ſerves.
Tormentor, ceaſe!
Attend. You wrong yourſelf too much.
Think, madam, how for years you baffled love:
Nor could *Egiſthus*, tho' he touch'd your heart,
Tho' many a midnight tear, and ſecret ſigh,
To me, and me alone, diſclos'd the pangs,
That dim'd your fading cheek; yet could he not,
With all his arts, his love, ſubmiſſion, charms,
O'ercome the ſtruggling purpoſe of your ſoul;
Till *Meliſander*, to a deſart iſle,
He baniſh'd from your ear.

Clyt. Ah,

Clyt. Ah, *Meliſander!*
Given to the beaſts a prey, or wilder famine;
Ah, periſh'd friend! ſerene directing light,
By *Agamemnon* left to guide my counſels;
Whom every ſcience, every muſe adorn'd,
While the good honeſt heart enrich'd them all;
Oh hadſt thou ſtill remain'd, then I, this day,
Had been as glorious as I now am wretched!
There breathes a felt divinity in virtue,
In candid unaſſuming generous virtue,
Whoſe very ſilence ſpeaks; and which inſpires,
Without proud formal leſſons, a diſdain
Of mean injurious vice. But loſt with him,
With *Meliſander*, reaſon, honour, pride,
Truth, ſound advice, my better genius fled;
I friendleſs, flatter'd, importun'd and charm'd,
Was left alone with all-ſeducing love;
Love to the future blind, each ſober thought,
Each conſequence deſpiſing, ſcorning all,
But what its own enchanting dreams ſuggeſt.
What could I do?—Away! ſelf-flattering guilt!
I ſhould have thought, when honour once is ſully'd,
Not weeping mercy's tears can waſh it clean;
And that one blot on mine diffus'd a ſtain
O'er the proud honour of a wedded king,
And o'er my children's, my poor blameleſs children's!
Whoſe cheeks will kindle at their mother's name:
I ſhould have thought—Would I could think no more!
To think is torture!

Attend. What avails it, madam———

Clyt. O *Meliſander!* If the dead could hear,
I would invoke thy friendly influence now,
Would wiſh thee preſent in this hour of trouble.
Perhaps there is in wiſdom, gentle wiſdom,

That

That knows our frailties, therefore can forgive,
Some healing comfort for a guilty mind,
Some power to charm it into peace again,
And bid it ſmile anew with right affections.
No! fruitleſs wiſh!—It cannot, cannot be!
Egiſthus, who may henceforth give me laws,
Dread of diſcovery, that worſt tyrant, ſhame,
And my own conſcious blotted heart forbid it,
Forbid retreat——

Attend. Madam, behold the man,
Who, then upon the watch, obſerv'd the ſignal
Of conquer'd *Troy*, and now attends your orders
To give a full account of what he ſaw.

SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *her* ATTENDANT, *and the* MAN *who obſerved the ſignal.*

Clyt. Are you then ſure that you beheld this ſignal?
Or was it not ſome viſion of the brain,
That painted while you ſlept, your waking wiſh?
Or elſe perhaps ſome meteor of the night?

Man. Madam, *Troy* doubtleſs lyes one heap of ruins;
I ſaw the ſignal of its fate diſtinctly.
The night was dark and ſtill. A heavier gloom
Ne'er cover'd earth. In low'ring clouds, the ſtars
Were muffled deep; and not one ray, below,
O'er all *Mycenae* glimmer'd, or around it.
When ſtrait, at fartheſt eaſt, a ruddy light
Sprung up, and wide-encreaſing, roll'd along;
By turns diminiſh'd, and by turns renew'd,
A wave of fire: at laſt, it flamed, confeſs'd,
From iſle to iſle, and beachy point to point:
Till the laſt blaze at *Nauplia* ended, plain.

A glorious fight! and as a *Greek* rejoic'd me.
Clyt. How ſits the wind?
Man. It blows from *Troy*, direct;
A bold and ſteady gale.
Clyt. 'Tis well Retire.
Your care and faithful pains ſhall be rewarded.

SCENE III.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *her* ATTENDANT.

Clyt. He comes! he comes! the hapleſs victor comes!
Even now his trophy'd veſſel ſtreaks the main,
And plows the billows with triumphant prow;
Or, by glad crowds received, perhaps, he hails
His native ſhore, and preſſes on to ſhame.
Even now, with glory charg'd, with conqueſt gay,
Crown'd with the laurels of ten famous years,
He dreams to join them to the peaceful olive;
And after rugged toils and perilous war,
Soft to repoſe him on the myrtle bed
Of calm domeſtic bliſs. How vain the hopes!
How ſhort the proſpect of believing man!
I dare not look before me, dare not paint
The riſing ſtorm.
Attend. Behold *Egiſthus*, Madam.
Clyt. Leave me.

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

Egiſt. [*after ſome ſilence.*] And is it thus, O *Clytemneſtra*,
Thus that, in hours of danger, lovers meet?
[*pauſing.*]
Still

Still coldly ſilent, ſtill the look averted,
Where not one ſoftneſs glows? While anger, fear,
Diſguſt and ſick repentance, ſhifting, cloud
Your vary'd cheek. 'Tis plain you never lov'd.
Clyt. Oh that I never had!
Egiſt. You never did.
The very power to wiſh it proves you did not.
Clyt. He ne'er deſerv'd my love, who dares ſuſpect it.
Egiſt. Not to ſuſpect it, weakneſs were and folly.
Clyt. Nor only doubt; believe your doubts.
Egiſt. I do.
Clyt. You do!
Egiſt. Nay more, am of their truth aſſur'd.
Clyt. 'Tis baſe, ungrateful, an ungenerous inſult,
To tell me this. Urge not too far, *Egiſthus*,
Urge not too far my guilt-dejected ſpirit.
Tho' you have trampled on my haughty virtue,
That noble pride of ſoul, which knows no fear,
And bears no inſult; yet to you, at leaſt,
To you of all mankind, I will be bold,
As I had never err'd, will be a queen,
The blood of *Jove*, be *Clytemneſtra* ſtill.
Egiſt. Be temperate, madam: I have told you nothing,
But that I am not worthy of your love.
Clyt. Curſe on that pride! which, with affected brow,
Humility conceals. And am I then ſo vile,
So loſt to reaſon, honour, common honour;
As without love, that all-compelling fury,
Without debaſing, thoughtleſs, blind, blind love;
To bow me from the height of happy life,
To this low fearful ſtate of coward ſhame?
Miſtake me not—I would not waſte one word,
One paſſing word, affronted thus, to ſave you

From jealouſy's worſt rage; did not, alas!
A kind of mournful juſtice to myſelf
Tear from my ſwelling heart the mean confeſſion.
How art thou fallen! to what diſhonour fallen!
Unhappy *Clytemneſtra!*

Egiſt. Harſh conſtruction!
And yet theſe frowns delight, that anger charms me.
O more than lovely! O majeſtic fair-one!
Since you then know the jealous force of love,
Forgive its tender fears, its fond offence;
Offence I could not mean.

Clyt. Ill-fated ſhe!
Who muſt forgive.

Egiſt. Nay rather caſt me from you,
Than thus upbraid me with ſo forc'd a pardon.
O *Clytemneſtra!* where are are now thoſe looks,
Thoſe looks of ſmiling heaven, of radiant ſweetneſs,
That waked our morn of love? Within whoſe ſphere,
No evil durſt approach, no ſadneſs dwell;
While the charm'd gazer knew nor fear nor danger?
And ſet they then at laſt in gloomy quarrels?
Let us not quarrel. Why ſhould lovers quarrel?
Life is for that too ſhort, too precious time;
Theſe moments chiefly, theſe impetuous moments,
That to the brink of ruin ſeem to roll
Our mingled fate. Even now——

Clyt. 'Tis true! 'tis true!
Alas! methinks, in every hollow blaſt,
That ſhakes this palace, *Agamemnon* comes.
Yes, yes, *Egiſthus*, ſtill a proof remains,
A matchleſs proof of love, I mean to give you.
Glad will I throw this regal pomp aſide,
And, inſtant, with you ſeek ſome diſtant country,
Some gloomy *Thracian* dale, where piny *Hemus*

May

May rap us in impenetrable ſhade:
There, there, the coarſeſt life, fed by hard toil,
Will be luxurious eaſe to what I feel,
To this big pang that labours at my heart,
And fires my mingling paſſions into anguiſh.
Quick! let us fly, *Egiſthus*, fly this moment!
The next may ſeize us, bind us down to ſhame,
Deteſted ſhame!

Egiſt. What! *Clytemneſtra!* fly!
That is indeed the road direct to ſhame,
To infamy for ever. He who flies,
In war or peace, who his great purpoſe yields,
He is the only villain of this world:
But he who labours firm and gains his point,
Be what it will, which crowns him with ſucceſs,
He is the ſon of fortune and of fame,
By thoſe admired, thoſe ſpecious villains moſt,
That elſe had bellow'd out reproach againſt him.
Beſides, your huſband, your vain-glorious huſband,
Proud *Agamemnon*, who ten years has warr'd
At *Troy*, to ſcourge your ſiſter *Helen*'s rape,
Dream you that he would not purſue our flight,
Tho' we took ſhelter in *Cimmerian* ſhades,
And drag us back, the ſcorn of hiſſing *Greece*,
To then deſerv'd, to true, unpity'd ſhame.

Clyt. Excuſe my weaker heart. But how, *Egiſthus*,
How ſhall I bear an injur'd huſband's eye?
The fierceſt foe wears not a look ſo dreadful,
As does the man we wrong.

Egiſt. Madam, your fears
Caſt a falſe glare upon your troubled reaſon,
That blinds it quite.—An injur'd huſband he!
He wrong'd! No, *Clytemneſtra* never, never,
Can never wrong her tyrant *Agamemnon*,

Tyrant of common *Greece*; can never wrong
The man who leaves her ten regardleſs years,
For the vain honours of a fooliſh war;
Nay, who conſumed thoſe years, if fame ſpeaks true,
In nothing leſs than war; inſtead of war,
In ſhameful ſquabbles with his nobler friends,
About their captive females, training out
An amorous revel rather than a war,
Far from his country, family and queen.
And can you wrong this falſe-one? Think of *Aulis*.
How baſely to that port you was betray'd,
And what dire nuptials waited there your daughter.
Think with what price he bought his cruel trophies.
Behold the firſt-born bloſſom of your youth,
Your *Iphigenia*, her mild eyes dejected,
Her cheek o'ercaſt with fear, her boſom bare,
An helpleſs, harmleſs, uncomplaining victim,
Stab'd by the murderous *Calchas*; whilſt her father,
Her unrelenting father, to protect
The ſacrifice, ſtands by. Behold, ſhe bleeds,
Pours the rich ſtream ſhe drew from that fair boſom,
Falls like a drooping flower untimely cut;
And all to purchaſe for her fire's impatience,
From ſome fell demon that bely'd *Diana*,
A riſing gale. The gale begins to blow,
The pendants flutter; when away he goes,
Gayly he goes; and leaves a wretched mother,
To weep her murder'd child.—If yet one ſpark
Of wonted ſpirit burns in *Clytemneſtra*,
If ſhe ſtill lives to juſtice and to nature;
Theſe, theſe are wrongs that call aloud for vengeance;
And there are hands that boldly—ſtart not, madam—
That will with pride avenge you.

Clyt. Ha! what hands?

What

What vengeance, ſay? Touch not ſo wild a ſtring;
It wakes new diſcord in my jarring ſoul.
To the juſt Gods, not us, pertaineth vengeance.
I cannot, will not, e'er conſent to—Gods!
Where roves my tongue?—You did not mention that,
You did not mean it ſure—Oh ſpare, *Egiſthus*,
In pity ſpare my laſt remains of virtue!
Oh make me not beyond recovery vile!
A horror to myſelf!—How wretched they,
Who feel, yet cannot ſave, their dying virtue!
[*A ſhout heard.*]
What means this tranſport of the madning people?
Oh my preſaging heart!—Save me!—Again!
Ah! little think they how their joy diſtracts me!

Egiſt. Some move this way—Reſume your temper, madam.

SCENE V.

To CLYTEMNESTRA *an* OFFICER *belonging to the court.*

Off. Madam, the king is near, from *Nauplia* comes;
But ſuch rejoicing crouds around him throng,
As makes his journey ſlow. Juſt now arriv'd
Talthybius brings the news, and craves admittance.

Clyt. Conduct him hither.

SCENE VI.

CLYTEMNESTRA, *alone.*

Oh too faithful ſignal!
Now muſt I take another ſtep in vice.
Down ſtubborn heart! and learn diſſimulation:
Yes, learn to ſmile, tho' ſorrow wrap thee round;
Learn to be friends with baſeneſs.—See! how gay
This herald ſtrides along! Miſtaken man!

SCENE VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, TALTHYBIUS, *with ſome* Grecian *ſoldiers that attend him.*

Clyt. Welcome, *Talthybius*; welcome, ye brav *Greeks.*
How fares the king?
Talth. Madam, the king is well;
Health, happineſs and glory, join to crown him.
His heart, impatient to confer with yours,
Sends me before him with its warmeſt wiſhes,
Its warmeſt gratulations. Tell, he ſaid,
" Go tell my *Clytemneſtra*, that the thoughts
" Of meeting her awake a dearer joy
" Than conqueſt ever gave: even tedious ſeems
" My people's love, that loſes me a moment."
This crown, which circled once the royal brows
Of *Hecuba*, of *Priam*'s lofty queen,
He prays you to accept.
Clyt. There ſet it down.
I own, *Talthybius*, the ſoft moiſture fills
My womaniſh eyes, while on the ſudden turns
Of fate I think, on fortune's ſad reverſes.
Oft when blind mortals think themſelves ſecure,
In height of bliſs, they touch the brink of ruin.
But ſure your voyage has been wond'rous quick,
Not three full days.—Is all the fleet return'd?
Talth. No, madam; none, except this ſingle ſhip,
Which bore the king: the reſt are ſcatter'd wide.
When to the joyous breeze we ſpread our ſails,
And left that bay, where *Simois* and *Scamander*
Mix with the rapid *Helleſpont*; while *Troy*
Or what was *Troy*, yet wreathing ſmoak to heaven,

And

And *Ida*'s woody top, receding, ſunk
Beneath the trembling main, the ſky was fair;
And, wing'd our courſe with ſlender airs, we ſail'd,
Till ſtrait, as evening fell, the fluttering gale,
Encreaſing gradual, from the red north-eaſt,
Blew ſtiff and fierce. At laſt the tempeſt howl'd.
Next morning, nought but angry ſeas and ſkies
Appear'd, conflicting, round. Mean time, right on,
Our ſtrong-ribb'd veſſel drove before the blaſt,
That, falling ſomewhat off its fury, gave us
A quick auſpicious voyage. Safe, we paſs'd
The *Cyclad* iſles, that, o'er the troubled deep,
Seem'd then to float amidſt the mingling ſtorm.
Only at one, with much ado, we touch'd,
Nor without riſque.

Clyt. And why?

Talth. Madam, compell'd
By ſacred pity. On the foaming beach,
A miſerable figure beck'ning ſtood,
Horrid and wild, with famine worn away.
His plaintive voice, half by the murmuring ſurge
Abſorpt, juſt reach'd our ears. In *Greek* he call'd,
And ſtrong adjur'd us by the gentle Gods,
That make the wretched their peculiar care,
To bear him thence, from ſavage ſolitude,
Into the chearful haunts of men again.

Clyt. What?—Of condition look'd he?

Talth. So he ſeem'd;
Tho' dim'd by helpleſs ſolitary life.
The king regards him much—Forgive me, madam;
I ſee the rueful image but diſturbs
Your generous ſoul.

Clyt. I thank you, good *Talthybius*;
And from the king himſelf will learn the reſt.

This ring, on which a victory is carv'd
With curious art, befits the news you bring:
I am your debtor ſtill; and, ſoldiers, yours.

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ATTENDANT.

Clyt. ARriv'd ſo ſoon! I am not half prepar'd:
My features all are ſunk with conſcious ſhame;
My eyes are yet too tender to diſſemble.
Attend. Madam, be firm. Wipe off theſe gloomy tears,
In which too plain is read your troubled ſoul.
Juſt now the trumpet ſpoke the king's approach.
Clyt. 'Tis come, at laſt, the trying hour is come!
Oh that my heart were hard, and features falſe!—
Again theſe trumpets ſwell—
Attend. A moment, madam,
A moment will betray you.
Clyt. Open, earth,
And ſwallow up my ſhame!—What can I do?
Where look? what ſay? confuſion! torture!
Attend. Madam,
Clyt. Ah, coward that I am! Was there no dagger,
To ſave this tenfold death?
Attend. Hark! loud and near,
The triumph comes.
Clyt. Well—give me breath—
[*Endeavouring to compoſe her agitation.*]
Agam. [*behind the ſcenes.*] A moment,

Leave

Leave me, my friends.

Clyt. Ha! heard you not his voice?
Yes, yes, 'tis he! Go, bring my children hither:
They may relieve me.

Attend. O remember!

Clyt. Heavens!

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA.

Agam. Where is my life! my love! my *Clytemneſtra!*
O let me preſs thee to my fluttering ſoul,
That is on wing to mix itſelf with thine!
O thou, for whom I live, for whom I conquer,
Than glory brighter! O my *Clytemneſtra!*
Now, in this dear embrace, I loſe the toils
Of ten years war; abſence, with all its pains,
Is by this charming moment wip'd away.
All-bounteous Gods! Sure never was a heart
So full, ſo bleſt as mine.—[*Diſcovering her diſorders,*]
But whence, my faireſt!
What mean theſe tears?—Not tears of happy love,
Such as I ſhed—What means that clouded look,
Whoſe downcaſt ſweetneſs will not ſhine upon me?
Why this cold meeting? Why unkindly damp'd
My ardor thus? O ſpeak, my *Clytemneſtra!*

Clyt. Forgive me, *Agamemnon*; but I cannot,
Alas! I cannot ſee your face again,
Without reflecting where I ſaw you laſt.
Aulis is preſent to my eyes anew,
The ſhips, the chiefs, the guards, the bloody *Calchas*,
All the dire pomp of ſacrifice around:
Anew my daughter bleeds, baſely deceiv'd!

And

And when I ſee that awful brow, that doom'd her,
Can *Agamemnon* wonder at my tears!

Agam. Why will my *Clytemneſtra* add new ſtings
To what here rankles but too deep already?
Ah! why impute to me the work of fate?
'Tis not indulging private inclination,
The ſelfiſh paſſions, that ſuſtains the world,
And lends its ruler's grace; no, 'tis not thence
That glory ſprings, and high immortal deeds:
The public good, the good of others, ſtill
Muſt bear fond nature down, in him who dares
Aſpire to worthy rule; imperious honour
Still o'er the moſt diſtinguiſh'd lords it moſt.
Was it for me?—Let even your paſſions judge—
For *Agamemnon* was it, when ordain'd,
By common voice, the general of the *Greeks*;
While twenty kings beneath my banner march'd;
And while around me full aſſembled *Greece*,
Indignant, kindled at your ſiſter's rape,
On her old native foe demanding vengeance,
On faithleſs *Aſia*: Was it then for me,
To quench this glorious flame? and to refuſe
One life to thouſands, to thoſe generous thouſands,
That for my honour, for the dearer honour
Of *Clytemneſtra*'s family, ſtood all
Prepar'd to die? If to the mingled voice
Of honour, duty, glory, public good,
Of the commanding Gods, I had been deaf;
And, in the feeble father, poorly ſunk
The *Greek*, the chief, the patriot and the king,
Greater than king, the general of the *Greeks*;
Then you yourſelf, my *Clytemneſtra*'s ſelf,
Muſt (let her heart avow the truth) have ſcorn'd me.
Nor think it was an eaſy reſignation.

Oh

Oh *Clytemneſtra!* had you ſeen within,
What here within my tortur'd boſom paſs'd;
To that my battles ſince were only ſport.
No, not the kindeſt mother bathed in tears,
As o'er her agonizing babe ſhe hangs,
Feels what I ſuffer'd then—You may remember—
Again the father melts me at the thought—
You may remember how I hid my face;
Aſham'd to let the *Greeks* around behold
The tears that miſbecame their general's cheek.
Then ceaſe to blame what rather merits pity,
I might add praiſe.—He, who the father's heart
More tender has than mine, too tender has it.
I love my children, as a father ſhould:
Beſides, I love them from a ſofter cauſe,
I love my *Clytemneſtra.*

Clyt. Had, alas!
Had *Agamemnon* lov'd me, would he, nay,
Could he have left me in the rage of grief,
My daughter yet freſh bleeding in my ſight?
Left me ſo long? Love ſurely muſt have found,
In the wide round of ten revolving years,
Some way to ſee me, to prevent theſe ſorrows—
Why was I thus abandon'd, *Agamemnon.*

Agam. Let me kiſs off theſe tears. O beauteous tears!
If ſhed by doubting love, if ſhed for abſence.
Inſtead of theſe reproaches, aſk me rather,
How I that abſence bore: and here all words,
All eloquence is dumb, to ſpeak the pangs,
That lurk'd beneath the rugged brow of war.
When glaring day was clos'd, and huſh'd the camp,
Oh! then, amid ten thouſand other cares,
Thoſe ſtung the keeneſt that remember'd thee,

That

That on my long left *Clytemneſtra* thought.
On what wild ſeas and mountains lay between us.
Clyt. Unhappy man!
Agam. What ſays my *Clytemneſtra?*
Clyt. Unhappy mortals! by vain words deceiv'd,
To their own pride, to joyleſs honour ſlaves.
Agam. He, he, alone, can claim a right to bliſs,
Who has fulfill'd the painful taſk of honour.
Clyt. But what avails a right to baniſh'd bliſs?
Agam. Let me once more adjure thee, *Clytemneſtra*,
By every tender name of love adjure thee,
To loſe in kind oblivion theſe our paſt—
I would not call them quarrels—Ah! there was,
There was a time—I will indulge the thought—
When everlaſting tranſport tuned our ſouls:
When join'd to vernal life, the ſpring of love
Around us gayly blow'd! and heaven and earth,
All ſmiling nature look'd delighted on.
Yet, would my *Clytemneſtra* lend her aid,
I know a paſſion ſtill more deeply charming
Than fever'd youth e'er felt; and that is love,
By long experience mellow'd into friendſhip.
How far beyond that froward child of fancy!
With beauty pleas'd a while, anon diſguſted,
Seeking ſome other toy; how far more noble
Is this bright offſpring of unchanging reaſon,
That fonder grows with age and charms for ever!
It is not often, *Clytemneſtra*, thus,
That I ſubmit to double my intreaties;
But, oh deſtroy not the collected hopes
Of life and love! Oh make not conqueſt hateful!
I ſhall abhor it, if it coſt me thee,
Coſt me thy love. A daughter was too much,
And ten years abſence from my *Clytemneſtra*.

Add

Add not to theſe a loſs I cannot bear,
The loſs of thee, thou lovelieſt of thy ſex!
And once the kindeſt!

Clyt. Oh!

Agam. Turn not away;
There is relenting goodneſs in thy look.

Clyt. Alas! untimely fondneſs—*Agamemnon!*
Too generous *Agamemnon!* you diſtreſs me.
Would you were not ſo kind, ſo tender, now!
Or ne'er had been ſo cruel.

Agam. 'Tis unjuſt
To call me cruel.—Fate, the Gods, our fortune
Were cruel to us both—What could I more
To ſooth our parting woes, and eaſe my abſence?
I left you *Meliſander* to adviſe you,
Left you the wiſeſt, faithfulleſt and beſt—
Oh whiſpering nature! Are not theſe my children?

SCENE III.

AGAMEMNON, CLYTEMNESTRA, ELECTRA, ORESTES.

Agam. My daughter! my *Electra!*

Elec. O my father!

Agam. Come to my arms, my boy, my dear *Oreſtes!*
In whom I live anew, my younger ſelf!
And thou, *Electra*; in thy opening cheek
I mark thy mother's bloom: even ſo ſhe look'd,
Such the mild light with which her beauty dawn'd.
Oh thou ſoft image of my *Clytemneſtra!*
My other *Iphigenia!*

Elec. Oh my father!
My joy! my pride! my glory! whom in dreams,
I oft have ſeen, as if return'd from *Troy*;

But ſtill unwelcome morning, with a tear,
Wip'd out the dear illuſion of the night.
And is it then no more a faithleſs viſion?
Oh 'tis my father! whoſe departure hence,
And *Iphigenia*'s death I juſt remember.
How glorious, *Iphigenia*, was thy death!
A death I envy rather than lament.
Who would not die to gain immortal fame,
Deliver *Greece*, and crown a father's glory?

Agam. Come to my arms again, my generous daughter!
And thou my ſon! O that thy tender years
Had ſuffer'd thee to ſhare our toils at *Troy?*
'Tis war that forms the prince; 'tis hardſhip, toil;
'Tis ſleepleſs nights, and never reſting days;
'Tis pain, 'tis danger, 'tis confronted death;
'Tis equal fate for all, and changing fortune;
That rear the mind to glory, that inſpire
The nobleſt virtues and the gentleſt manners.
Where ſhall I find, to teach thee theſe, *Oreſtes*,
Another *Troy?*

Oreſ. How happy had I been!
To have beheld what I muſt only hear!
But I will hear it often, every day;
Will learn your ſtory, ſtudy your example;
Will try to mix your virtues with your blood,
And not diſgrace the laurels I inherit.
My boſom flutters with I know not what.—
—Forgive me, Sir, I am too young to ſay it—
But ſomething here I feel, which bids me hope
That I ſhall not betray my father's honour.

Agam. Son of my ſoul!—Look here, my *Clytemneſtra!*
Look here and weep with tenderneſs and tranſport!

When

What is all taſteleſs luxury to this?
To theſe beſt joys, which holy love beſtows?
O nature! parent nature! thou, alone,
Art the true judge of what can make us happy?

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

Off. Egiſthus, Sir, attends.

Agam. Go, bid him enter.
Retire, my *Clytemneſtra*, my dear children:
We ſoon ſhall meet again, till then farewell.

SCENE IV.

AGAMEMNON.

Obey me, features, for one ſupple moment:
You ſhall not long be tortur'd. Here, in courts,
We muſt not wear the ſoldier's honeſt face.
He little thinks I have him in the ſnare
Of *Meliſander*, whom, in my return,
I from that deſart iſland chanc'd to ſave,
To which the ruffian——

SCENE V.

AGAMEMNON, EGISTHUS.

Egiſt. Health to *Agamemnon!*
And happineſs reſponſive to his glory!
Agam. Couſin, I greet you well.
Egiſt. Forgive me, Sir,
You have ſurpriz'd us with this quick return:
For by that ſignal, whoſe illuſtrious flame
Rejoic'd all *Greece*, we did not hope your preſence
Theſe three days hence. Forgive, that, unprepar'd,
We only with that joy, that loyal tranſport,
Which ſwells each *Grecian* boſom, thus receive you.
And truly ſuch a burſt I have not ſeen

Of

Of that beſt triumph. City, country, all,
Is in a gay triumphant tempeſt toſt.
I ſcarce could preſs along. The trumpet's voice
Is loſt in loud repeated ſhouts, that raiſe
Your name to heaven. Ten thouſand eyes, below,
Ache to behold the conqueror of *Troy*.

Agam. The nobleſt praiſe that can ſalute my ear,
The ſweeteſt muſic, is my people's joy.
But ſure your tongue has done it ample juſtice;
Truſt me; you blazon a deſcription well.
I have not heard ſo much obliging ſpeech
Theſe many years.

Egiſt. Miſconſtrue not my zeal:
On the full heart obedient language waits.
I feel ſo deep your glory, *Agamemnon*,
As mingles with my joy a ſort of paſſion,
That almoſt touches envy. O ye Gods!
Has, while I live, a war, the moſt renown'd
Which any age e'er ſaw, or ſhall again
Be ſeen; a war, whoſe never-dying fame
Will cover earth, and reach remoteſt time,
Has ſuch a war adorn'd my days, and I
Not ſhar'd its glory? Pining here, unknown,
In nameleſs peace—how have I loſt my life!

Agam. This ardor is the mode. But know, *Egiſthus*,
That ruling a free people well in peace,
Without or yielding or uſurping power;
Maintaining firm the honour of the laws,
Yet ſometimes ſoftening their too rigid doom,
As mercy may require; ſteering the ſtate,
Thro' factious ſtorms, or the more dangerous calms
Of peace, by long continuance grown corrupt;
Beſides the fair career which fortune opens
To the mild glories of protected arts,

To

To bounty, to beneficence, to deeds
That give the Gods themſelves their brighteſt beams:
Yes, know, that theſe are, in true glory, equal,
If not ſuperior, to deluding conqueſt:
Nor leſs demand they conduct, courage, care,
And perſevering toil.

Egiſt. Say thankleſs toil,
Harſh and unpleaſing; that inſtead of praiſe
And due reward, meets oftener ſcorn, reproach,
Fierce oppoſition to the cleareſt meaſures;
Injuſtice, baniſhment, or death itſelf:
Such is the nature of malignant man.
Not ſo the victor's meed: him all approve,
Him all admire.

Agam. Yet tho' a toilſome taſk,
Tho' an ungrateful labour oft to rule;
I not ſo hardly of mankind, *Egiſthus*,
Preſume to judge. Truth, wiſdom, courage, juſtice,
Beneficence, and for the public good
A conſtant tenor of well-laid deſigns,
Muſt ſtill be awful in the worſt of times,
Be amiable, dear; while worth at laſt
Will light up worth, and virtue kindle virtue.
You was, however, eas'd of half the toil,
By him I left to counſel *Clytemneſtra*,
By *Meliſander*.

Egiſt. Would to heaven I had!

Agam. You much amaze me.—Is not *Meliſander*
Wiſe, juſt and faithful?

Egiſt. Sir, I muſt confeſs
He wore a ſpecious maſk——

Agam. Beware, *Egiſthus*;
I know his ſtedfaſt worth, and will not bear
The fartheſt hint that ſtains the man I love.

Egiſt. Then

Egiſt. Then urg'd by truth, and in my own defence
I boldly will aſſert him, *Agamemnon*,
To be more apt to trouble and embroil,
Than ſerve a ſtate. A certain ſtubborn virtue,
I'would ſay affectation of blunt virtue,
Beneath whoſe outſide froth, fermenting lay
Pride, envy, faction, turbulence of ſoul,
And democratic views, in ſome ſort made him
A ſecret traitor, equally unfit
Or to obey or rule. But that I check'd
His early treaſons, here at your return,
You might have found your kingdom a republic.

Agam. O I ſhall loſe all patience! [*Aſide.*
You do well
To give your accuſation open ſpeech.
Mean-time, remember you muſt fully prove it,
You muſt!—And he who *Meliſander* proves
The wretch you have deſcrib'd, proves man is vain,
And ſaps the broad foundations of all truſt.
I know he would not patiently look on,
And ſuffer ill deſigns to gather ſtrength,
Awaiting gentle ſeaſons; yes, I know
He had a troubleſome old-faſhion'd way
Of ſhocking courtly ears with horrid truth.
He was no civil ruffian: none of thoſe,
Who lye with twiſted looks, betray with ſhrugs—
I wax too warm.—But he was none of thoſe,
Was none of thoſe duſt-licking, reptile, cloſe,
Inſinuating, ſpeckled, ſmooth court-ſerpents,
That make it ſo unſafe, chiefly for kings,
To walk this weedy world—Pardon my heat—
I wander from the purpoſe—You, *Egiſthus*,
Muſt prove your charge, to *Meliſander*'s face
Muſt prove it.

Egiſt. Surely—

Egiſt. Surely—Since the princely faith
Of your own blood you doubt—
Agam. Friendſhip and truth
Are more a-kin to me than blood.
Egiſt. You ſhall,
You ſhall have proof; but to his face you cannot.
Agam. But to his face I will!—I cannot! why?
Egiſt. He wanders far from hence, I know not where,
For when I found him an undoubted traitor,
Tho' he the heavieſt puniſhment deſerv'd;
Yet in regard to that eſteem, which, once,
You deign'd to bear him, baniſhment alone
Was all I did inflict.
Agam. I thank you, Sir—
O you are wond'rous good!—But tell me, how,
How durſt you meddle in the ſphere aſſign'd
To *Clytemneſtra?* He was left to her;
To be her counſellor I left my friend,
Left *Meliſander*; left a man, whom long,
Whom well I knew; perhaps, to check you, left him;
And you pretend, you!—But I will be calm—
Theſe paſſions in a king to his inferiors,
Who cannot anſwer equal, are not comely.
Forgive my tranſport—A more quiet hour
Shall ſift this matter to the bottom, ſhall
Do *Meliſander* or *Egiſthus* juſtice.

SCENE VI.

EGISTHUS.

Now go thy way, weak open-hearted man,
Thus to declare the ruin thou intendeſt.
Go, rate thy *Trojan* ſlaves; and elſewhere practiſe
This inſolence of camps. Tame, as I ſeem,
Submiſſive,

Submiſſive, mild and patient of thy threats;
Yet, ere to-morrow's ſun beholds *Mycenae*,
My ſure-aim'd blow ſhall pierce thy ſwelling heart,
And cool this tyrant fever in thy veins.
Were not our blood, our kindred blood at variance,
And therefore burning with immortal hate;
Had not thy father *Atreus*, at a banquet,
A dreadful banquet! from whoſe ſight the ſun
Turn'd back eclips'd, ſerv'd—monſtrous!—up to mine
To his own brother, to the pale *Thyeſtes*,
His murder'd ſons: didſt thou not wear a crown
Then by thy father raviſh'd from our line,
Mycenae's crown, which he unjuſtly ſeiz'd,
And added to his own, to that of *Argos*:
Had I not ſtain'd thy bed with *Clytemneſtra*:
Tho' ſafety did not urge, and ſelf-defence:
Yet this vile treatment, treatment fit for ſlaves;
Thanks to thy fury! this has fix'd thy doom,
Some fooliſh ſcruples, that ſtill hung about me,
Are by this friendly tempeſt blown away.—
But *Clytemneſtra* comes. How ſhall I calm
Her troubled mind? How bring her to my purpoſe?

SCENE VII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

Clyt. Here let me kneel, *Egiſthus*, graſp thy knees;
Here let me grow till my requeſt be granted.
Now is the very criſis of my fate.
Egiſt. What ſight is this I ſee? Riſe, *Clytemneſtra*.
Thou faireſt, moſt majeſtic of thy ſex!
It miſbecomes thee much this ſuppliant poſture.
O there is nothing, nothing, ſure, which you
Need ſtoop to aſk! ſpeak, and command it, Madam.
Clyt. The

Clyt. Then let us henceforth be, as if this love
Had never been betwixt us.
Egiſt. Ceaſe to love thee!
What wild demand! Impoſſible!—Even now,
Endear'd by danger, by diſtreſs endear'd,
I for thee feel a fonder pang than e'er
I felt before.
Clyt. No! theſe deluding words
Can charm no longer; their enchantment flies;
And in my breaſt the guilty paſſions jar,
Unkind, unjoyous, unharmonious all.
Ah me! from real happineſs we ſtray,
By vice bewilder'd, vice, which always leads,
However fair at firſt, to wilds of woe.
Egiſt. Ah! *Clytemneſtra!* didſt thou love—
Clyt. No more!
Seduce my ſoul no more! Here will I ſtop—
Beyond this line 'tis miſery, 'tis madneſs,
The furies flaſh their torches, vultures tear,
The mingled tortures of the damn'd await me.
Oh! if your paſſion be not merely ſelfiſh,
If the leaſt tenderneſs for me you feel,
Drive me no farther down the gulph of woe!
To happineſs I bid a laſt farewell;
I aſk not happineſs; no, that I leave
To innocence and virtue; peace, alone,
Some poor remains of peace are all I aſk,
Not to be greatly wretched, plung'd in horrors?
And yet, who knows, the heavenly ſpark, that ſleeps
Beneath theſe embers, yet may ſpread anew
Its chearful luſtre—All may yet be well—
For *Agamemnon* was ſo kind, ſo gentle,
With ſuch a holy tender flame he burn'd,
As might have kindled in a barbarous breaſt

Humanity

Humanity and virtue.

Egiſt. All pretence.
I gueſs his aim! I penetrate his purpoſe.
On you he laviſh'd fondneſs, while on me
He lower'd deſtruction. Doubtleſs, with his ear
Some villain has been buſy; and he means
Firſt to divide us, then with greater eaſe
To ruin both—And can you then be caught,
Caught with the common proſtituted ſpeeches,
That oft have ſicken'd on the glowing lip
Of many a *Trojan* ſlave? *Chryſeïs* had them;
Briſeïs too: and now *Caſſandra*, ſhe,
Who, more like a triumphant queen than captive,
Is every hour expected—

Clyt. What *Caſſandra?*

Egiſt. O it imports you little what *Caſſandra!*
Thus poorly tame you ne'er will want *Caſſandras.*
What is become of *Clytemneſtra*'s ſpirit,
That ſhe can thus forget her high deſcent,
Forget her rank, her honour, nay forget
Her injuries?

Clyt. But what *Caſſandra*, ſay?

Egiſt. Why *Priam*'s daughter, the prophetic princeſs,
The proud, the young, the beautiful *Caſſandra:*
So vain of heart, ſhe dreamt *Apollo* lov'd her,
And, on her plighted faith to crown his love,
Beſtow'd the gift of prophecy; the gift
In her poſſeſſion, ſhe deceiv'd the God;
Whence he, provok'd, with this condition daſh'd it
Of never gaining credit. So the tale,
The fable runs—Yet, on my ſoul, I think,
Did ſhe give out, ſhe will be queen of *Argos,*
She were indeed a propheteſs.

Clyt. 'Tis well.

You mean it for an inſult this, you do.
What elſe could tempt you to deride me, Sir,
With ſuch extravagance.
Egiſt. Miſtake me not;
I mean it, Madam, for a ſerious truth,
I mean it for a certainty, if thus
You droop, unnerv'd with theſe dejecting fears.
Clyt. Caſſandra queen of *Argos!*
Egiſt. Queen of *Argos*;
While *Clytemneſtra* in a priſon pines;
Where ſhe may weep, and moralize at leiſure.
Clyt. By Heavens! ſhe viſits firſt her father's ſhade.
Egiſt. There ſhone your native ſelf. Let bright revenge,
I ſhould ſay juſtice, diſſipate theſe clouds,
Theſe melancholy whims of ill-judg'd virtue,
And ſhew you burning with your former luſtre.
Madam, our fates are blended: know, we ſtand
Or fall together. Shame, contempt, and ruin,
Or ſafety, love, and glory, is our choice.
And can we doubt a moment?
Clyt. But *Egiſthus*—
Egiſt. I know the purpoſe of thy pleading eye.
Of that hereafter—We ſhall meet again—
My preſence now is wanted in the city.
Fear nothing—Thou ſhalt know before we act,
Thou, for whoſe ſake alone I act and live!

The End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

ARCAS, MELISANDER.

Arc. AND have I found my long-loſt friend again?
My *Meliſander!* But ſo chang'd your look,

So ſickly'd with a kind of thoughtful ſadneſs,
So ſunk each feature, by ſeven drooping years
Spent in that deſart iſle, as baffled quite
My wandring recollection.
Meliſ. True, dear *Arcas:*
For what a helpleſs creature, by himſelf,
Is the proud lord of this inferior world,
Vain feeble man! the commoners of nature,
Each wing that flits along the ſpacious ſky,
Is leſs dependant than their boaſting maſter.
Hail ſocial life! into thy pleaſing bounds
Again I come, to pay the common ſtock
My ſhare of ſervice; and, in glad return,
To taſte thy comforts, thy protected joys.
Arc. O greatly welcome! you deſerve them well,
You well deſerve the ſocial life you poliſh.
Still on my thought your ſtrange delivery dwells.
By *Agamemnon* left to aid the queen,
With faithful counſel, while he warr'd at *Troy:*
And thus by *Agamemnon* to be ſav'd,
Returning from that conqueſt! wondrous chance!
Or rather wondrous conduct of the Gods!
By mortals, from their blindneſs, chance miſnamed.
Mean-time, inſtruct me, while the king repoſes,
How was you ſnatch'd away? and how, ſo long,
Could you this dreadful ſolitude ſupport?
I burn to know the whole.
Meliſ. 'Tis thus, my friend.
While ſunk in unſuſpecting ſleep I lay,
Some midnight ruffians ruſh'd into my chamber,
Sent by *Egiſthus*, who my preſence deem'd
Obſtructive (ſo I ſolve it) to his views;
Black views, I fear, as you perhaps may know.
Sudden they ſeiz'd, and muffled up in darkneſs,

Strait bore me to the ſea, whoſe inſtant prey
I did conclude myſelf, when firſt, around
The ſhip unmoor'd, I heard the chiding wave.
But theſe fell tools of cruel power, it ſeems,
Had orders on a deſart iſle to leave me;
There hopeleſs, helpleſs, comfortleſs, to prove
The utmoſt gall and bitterneſs of death.
Thus malice often overſhoots itſelf,
And ſome unguarded accident betrays
The man of blood.—Next night—a dreary night!
Caſt on the wildeſt of the *Cyclad iſles*,
Where never human foot had mark'd the ſhore,
Theſe ruffians left me—Yet believe me, *Arcas*,
Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
All ruffians as they were, I never heard
A ſound ſo diſmal as their parting oars.—
Then horrid ſilence follow'd, broke alone
By the low murmurs of the reſtleſs deep,
Mixt with the doubtful breeze that now and then
Sigh'd thro' the mournful woods. Beneath a ſhade
I ſat me down, more heavily oppreſs'd,
More deſolate at heart, than e'er I felt
Before. When *Philomela*, o'er my head,
Began to tune her melancholy ſtrain,
As piteous of my woes; till, by degrees,
Compoſing ſleep on wounded nature ſhed,
A kind but ſhort relief. At early morn,
Wak'd by the chaunt of birds, I look'd around,
For uſual objects: objects found I none,
Except before me ſtretch'd the toiling main,
And rocks and woods, in ſavage view, behind.
Wrapt for a moment in amaz'd confuſion,
My thought turn'd giddy round; when, all at once,
To memory full my dire condition ruſh'd.

Arc. But of each comfort, each convenience void,
How could you life ſuſtain? how fence againſt
Inclement ſkies.

Meliſ. A moſſy cave, that fac'd
The ſouthern ſea, and in whoſe deep receſs
Boil'd up a cryſtal fountain, was my home.
Herbs were my food, thoſe bleſſed ſtores of health!
Only when winter, from my daily ſearch,
Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
In faithleſs ſnares to ſeize, which truly griev'd me,
My ſylvan friends; that ne'er till then had known,
And therefore dreaded leſs the tyrant man.

But theſe low hardſhips ſcarce deſerve regard:
The pangs, that ſharpeſt ſtung, were in my mind;
There deſolation reign'd; and there, cut off
From ſocial life, I felt a conſtant death.
And yet theſe pangs at laſt forgot to throb;
What cannot lenient gentle time perform?
I eat my lonely meal without a tear;
Nor ſigh'd to ſee the dreadful night deſcend.
In my own breaſt, a world within myſelf,
In ſtreams, and groves, in ſunny hill and ſhade;
In all that blooms with vegetable life,
Or joys with kindred animal ſenſation;
In the full-peopled round of azure heaven;
Whene'er, I ſtudious, look'd, I found companions.
But, chief, the muſes lent their ſoft'ning aid.
At their enchanting voice my ſorrows fled,
Or learn'd to pleaſe; while, thro' my troubled heart,
They breath'd the ſoul of harmony anew.
Thus of the great community of nature
A denizen I liv'd; and oft, in hymns
And rapturous thought, even with the Gods convers'd,
That not diſdain ſometimes the walks of man.

So

So paſs'd the time, when, lo! within my call,
Arriv'd the ſhip, which hope had often promis'd——
The ſhip!—O it ſurpaſs'd my fondeſt dream,
E'er to imagine the gay ſhip that came!
As on the deck I *Agamemnon* ſaw,
All glorious with the ſpoils of conquer'd *Troy*;
Ye Gods! what tranſport, what amazement ſeiz'd me!
What adoration of your wondrous ways!
Expreſſion ſinks beneath them.

Arc. Sweet reward
Of manly patience! that, to fortune ſtill
Superior, ſcorns deſpair.

Meliſ. This theme, my friend,
Will better ſuit a leiſure hour; but now,
The high concerns of life demand our care.
I have already to the king imparted
Suſpicions of *Egiſthus*, and remain
In this diſguiſe, not to alarm his guilt,
Till it more full appear, and proper ſteps
To puniſh his miſgovernment be taken.
If he has ill deſigns, you *Arcas*, you,
Muſt, while you ſeem'd regardleſs, have diſcern'd them.
Your calm but keen inſpection, not diſturb'd
By the vain flutter of ill-tim'd diſcourſe,
Muſt reach the very bottom of his purpoſe.
In you the king confides, of you demands,
As of his beſt lov'd ſubject in *Mycenae*,
The truth.

Arc. O, I have precious truths in ſtore!
And that beſt treaſure will unlock before him:
Long has my ſilent obſervation trac'd
Egiſthus, thro' the doubling maze of treaſon;
But now his ill deſigns are too too plain,
To all *Mycenae* plain; and who indeed,

Who can have good ones, that corrupts a people?
It was, however, hard, a bitter taſk!
To wink at public villainy; to wipe
Each honeſt paſſion from my livid face,
To bind my hands, and ſeal my quivering lips,
While my heart burn'd with rage, and treaſur'd up
A ſtorm of indignation——
Meliſ. Give it way!
O 'tis a glorious luxury! Oppreſt,
For years, beneath a load of wicked power,
To heave it off indignant, and aſſert
The dear dear freedom of a virtuous mind.
Curſe on the coward or perfidious tongue,
That dares not, even to kings, avow the truth!
Let traitors wrap them in deluſive incenſe,
On flattery flattery heap, on falſhood falſhood:
Truth is the living liberal breath of heaven;
That ſweeps theſe fogs away, with all their vermin.
And on my ſoul I think that *Agamemnon*
Deſerves ſome touch of blame. To put the power,
The power of bleſſing or oppreſſing *millions*,
Of doing or great good or equal miſchief,
Even into doubtful hands, is worſe than careleſs.
Ye Gods, avert the miſeries that hence
On him and on his family may fall!
But, ſee, the king.

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER, ARCAS.

Agam. Nay, *Arcas*, to my boſom, [*Arcas kneeling.*]
Come, let me proudly take a faithful heart!
Arc. Thrice welcome, *Sir*, to *Argos* and *Mycenae!*
To virtue welcome!

Agam.

Agam. In my own dominions
I am a ſtranger, *Arcas.* Ten full years,
Or even one day, is abſence for a king,
Without ſome mighty reaſon, much too long.
For me, a juſt and memorable war,
Whoſe actions future times perhaps may ſing,
My own, my brother's, and my people's honour,
With that of common *Greece*, muſt plead my pardon.
Now ſhall my cares attend the works of peace:
Calm deeds that glare not on the vulgar eye;
And yet it equal courage oft demands,
To quell injuſtice, riot, factious rage,
Dark-working blind cabal and bold diſorder,
As to confront the rigid face of war.
Then tell me, *Arcas*, for till ſelf-inform'd,
I mean to ſee with your diſcerning eyes,
And ſure I am they never will miſlead me,
Have I much ſubject for this peaceful courage?
This fortitude of ſtate?

Arc. Too much, my lord.
Would to the Gods, our virtues, here at home,
Could anſwer your heroic deeds abroad!
You, doubtleſs, from the rugged ſchool of war,
Have brought ſound manly hearts, and generous ſpirits:
While we, alas! we rot in weedy peace,
In ſlothful riot, luxury, profuſion,
And every meanneſs to repair that waſte——
I ſee the noble blood, indignant, mount,
At this relation, to my ſovereign's cheek:
But as affairs now preſs, I were a traitor,
If with a ſparing tongue I ſpoke the truth.

Agam. Immortal Gods! have I this ten long years,
Suſtain'd a war at *Troy*; fill'd every day
With cares inceſſant, councils, dangers, toils,

To cheriſh villains in licentious eaſe?
Have I thus ſquander'd vile, on *Phrygian* plains,
The braveſt blood of *Greece* to ſhelter ſuch;
And to aſſert their honour who have none?
But what can this perfidious, this *Egiſthus*,
What can he, ſay, by ſuch looſe rule propoſe?
Is it his native bent? Or does he puſh
Some dark deſign, by theſe deteſted means?

Arc. There is no vice a ſtranger to his heart,
Conceal'd beneath refin'd diſſimulation:
Diſſimulation that on you yourſelf
Impos'd. Mean-time, Sir, his outrageous views
Invade the throne of *Argos* and *Mycenae*.

Agam. Said you the throne of *Argos* and *Mycenae*?
Already have I loſt my nobleſt throne,
If he has robb'd me of my people's virtue;
'Tis but vain pomp, a tyrant's toy, the other.
And dares he bear a giddy look ſo high,
As to my throne? The villain! ſure he dares not.

Arc. Nay, more, my lord—He ſcales the dazzling height,
And almoſt graſps with impious hands your ſcepter.

Agam. To touch it is perdition:—What! *Egiſthus*!
Egiſthus ſeize my throne!

Arc. So means the traitor.

Agam. That creature of my power! that inſect! rais'd
By the warm beams of my miſtaken bounty!
Whom, when my father's vengeance raz'd his race,
I ſaved, train'd up, with favours, honours heap'd;
And truſted in his hands at laſt a jewel
Too precious for the faithleſs heart of man——
O groſs, groſs blindneſs!—Half my kingly pow'r!
Ay, there breaks out his father's treacherous blood!
There,

There, there, too late, I find the baſe *Thyeſtes!*
Forgive me, *Atreus!* O my royal father!
Forgive my truſting thus the ſeed of him,
Of an abhor'd, an execrable brother,
Who even profan'd thy bed—But, ere yon orb
Shall from the purpled ocean riſe again,
Oh injur'd *Atreus!* by thy ſacred ſhade
I ſwear, to make for this a full atonement.
Is then this people, *Arcas*, grown ſo vile,
So very vile, that he dares entertain
The ſmalleſt hope to rival me in empire?
I like not vaunting—But, ungrateful people!
Can you prefer a nameleſs thing to me?
Am I not rough with ſcars on your account?
And for the careful love I always bore you,
Your father named? And yet prefer to me,
One who ne'er ſaw the glorious front of war,
For nothing famous but corrupting peace,
And whoſe ſole merit was my ill-judg'd favour?
Can you?—away!—Diſhonour ſtains the thought!
How ſhould this be?
Arc. Not many, Sir, ſtand fix'd
On the deep principles of reaſon'd virtue,
Whom time nor ſteals, nor paſſion bears away.
Mankind, in general, float along the ſtream
Of cuſtom, good or bad; and oft the mind
To that familiar grows, by gradual uſe
And ſtill-encroaching vice, whoſe firſt regard
Gave horror. Hence ten looſely-govern'd years
Have wrought ſuch ſtrange events, that you no more
Behold your antient *Argos* and *Mycenae.*
Theſe cities now with ſlaves and villains ſwarm,
At firſt *Egiſthus*, popular and fair,
All ſmiles and ſoftneſs, as if each man's friend,

By hidden ways proceeded, mining virtue:
He pride, he pomp, he luxury diffus'd;
He taught them wants, beyond their private means:
And ſtrait, in bounty's pleaſing chains involv'd,
They grew his ſlaves. Who cannot live on little,
Or as his various fortune ſhall permit,
Stands in the market ready to be ſold.

Agam. O damn'd deteſted traffic!—But proceed.

Arc. While the luxurious fever thus increas'd,
Still, in proportion as it gather'd rage,
He lent it fuel; and, more bold, diſclos'd
His noon-day treaſon. Murmurs went about,
And ſpread at laſt into the common talk,
That you was proud, ſevere, beneath the notion
Of holding firm the helm of ſtate, a tyrant;
That in vain wars, which nought imported them,
You ſpent their treaſure, ſhed their nobleſt blood;
And that, *Troy* conquer'd once, to her rich plains
You meant from *Argos* to tranſplant your empire.
Mean-time, in private, all, whom wild debauch
Has ſet adrift from every human tie;
Whom riot, want, and conſcious guilt inflame,
Holding the Gods and virtue in contempt,
Amidſt their bowls; ſuch are his boſom-friends:
And join'd to them, a meaner ruffian band,
Of villains bold in crimes, whoſe trade is murder,
Hang in black clouds around him; whence, I fear,
A ſudden tempeſt is prepar'd to burſt.
This, Sir, from duty and a faithful zeal,
I plain unfold: nor, on my word, alone,
Believe theſe accuſations; clear as day,
I for them will produce the ſtrongeſt proof.

Agam. I thank thee, *Arcas*. Truth, tho' ſometimes clad

In

In painful luſtre, yet it is always welcome,
Dear as the light, that ſhews the lurking rock:
'Tis the fair ſtar that, ne'er into the main
Deſcending, leads us ſafe thro' ſtormy life—
Gods! how it tears me from each calmer thought!
To think this traitor, that th's double traitor,
This traitor to myſelf and to my people,
Should by ſuch ſneaking, ſuch unmanly ways,
Thus filch away my crown!—
Why ſtand I chaſing here? One timely deed
Is worth ten thouſand words—Come then, my friends,
Come and behold me ſeize, amidſt his guards,
His coward guards—Guilt ever was a coward—
This rival king, and with him crown my triumph.
Till then *Troy* ſmoaks in vain, and *Agamemnon*
Cannot be ſaid to conquer.

Meliſ. Sir, beware—

Agam. Of what beware? Where am I, *Meliſander?*
Am I not in *Mycenae?* in my palace?
Are not theſe crouds, that ſtream along the ſtreets,
My ſubjects all? Of what ſhould I beware?
Not ſeize a traitor in my own dominions?
Yes I will ſeize him, *Meliſander*,—will!

Meliſ. What grace to Kings ſuch generous ardor gives!
But tho' brave deeds be warm at firſt conceiv'd,
Let the beſt purpoſe cool, nor miſs your blow.
More firm and ſure the hand of courage ſtrikes,
When it obeys the watchful eye of caution.
You hear from *Arcas*, Sir, what ruffian bands,
What ſecret deaths, what daggers lurk around him:
Be cautious then; for virtue's, glory's ſake!
And, when you ſtrike, ſtrike home.

Agam. O for thoſe *Greeks!*

That

That this rude day are toſſing on the ſeas;
Thoſe hardy *Greeks*, whom ten years war has ſteel'd;
With toils, with dangers, and with death familiar:
Then ſhould you ſee what chaff before the wind
Are theſe weak ſons of ſoft enfeebling peace,
Theſe wretches, only bold where unreſiſted.

Meliſ. But ſince, my lord, you cannot now exert
This nobler force, let prudence take its place.
Have patience, only, till you ſafely can,
And ſurely, ſeize him.

Agam. Well, till then, I will.
And, tho' not made of patient mold, in this
I will have patience, will ſome tedious hours,
Repreſs my vengeance——— [*Pauſing.*]
Yes, I like the thought———
He may be ſeiz'd this evening at the banquet,
Be there ſurpriz'd with eaſe—and ſhall!—
For by th' eternal Gods that rule mankind!
The ſleep of death alone ſhall ſeal theſe eyes,
While ſuch a wretch holds power in my dominions.
Oh *Clytemneſtra!* to the public, now,
Succeeds the private pang—At thought of thee,
New rage, new vengeance ſhake my inmoſt ſoul!
Was my belov'd, my queen, my *Clytemneſtra*,
So long abandon'd in a villain's power,
Who knows, it ſeems, no limits, owns no laws,
Save thoſe one vice impoſes on another?
And now the ſecret cauſe, I fear, is plain,
Of that unuſual damp, that ſtrange dejection,
Which clouded her at meeting. Still the more
I pour'd my fondneſs, ſtill the more diſtreſs'd
She ſeem'd; and, turning from my tender gaze,
The copious ſhower ſtole down her troubled cheek?

As

As if ſhe pity'd thoſe my blind endearments,
And in her breaſt ſome horrid ſecret ſwell'd—
Should it be ſo—Confuſion!—Can I ſtoop
Even to ſuppoſe it!—How from ſlight miſtakes
Great evils ſpring! But the moſt fruitful ſource
Of every evil—O that I, in thunder,
Could ſound it o'er the liſtning earth to kings—
Is delegating power to wicked hands.

Meliſ. My lord, let no ſuſpicions of the queen
E'er taint your boſom; if I judge aright—

Agam. No, *Meliſander*, no: I am not jealous;
In me that paſſion and contempt were one;
No, 'tis her ſituation gives me horror,
Her dreadful ſituation! But of this
Enough—Then tell me, *Arcas*, tell me truly;
Are there a few! ſay, do there yet remain
A faithful few! to ſave the ſinking ſtate!
Can you, ere night, collect an honeſt band,
A band of ſuch as worthy are to reſcue
Their king and country from impending fate?
Ah! little thought I, that amidſt my ſubjects,
Emboſom'd ſweet in peace, I, like a tyrant,
Should e'er have needed guards.

Arc. Yes, Sir, I know
A band of generous youths, whom native virtue,
Unbroken yet by avarice or profuſion,
Fits for our purpoſe: theſe I can collect——

Agam. About it quickly, *Arcas*; loſe no time:
Go, bring me to the banquet thoſe brave youths:
I long for their acquaintance. Till that hour,
Domeſtic cares and joys demand my preſence:
The father's heart now bears me to my children.
Farewell! My all depends upon your conduct.

End of the Third Act.

ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER.

Agam. DOMESTIC pleaſures ſpread their charms in vain——
O for the hour of vengeance! I, till then,
But ſtalk about the ſhadow of a king.
Heard you from *Arcas* aught?
Meliſ. Be patient, Sir.
As yet the time permits not his return.
Arcas is zealous, ardent in your ſervice,
And will not fail his duty.

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

Off. Sir, *Caſſandra*
Is juſt arriv'd.
Agam. Conduct the princeſs hither.
This *Priam*'s faireſt daughter, *Meliſander*,
Is a young princeſs of engaging beauty,
Rais'd by diſtreſs, of noble ſenſe and ſpirit;
But, by poetic viſions led aſtray,
She dreamt *Apollo* lov'd her, and the gift
Of prophecy beſtow'd, to gain her promiſe:
The gift once her's, the chaſtly faithleſs maid
Deceiv'd the God; who therefore, in revenge,
Since he could not recall it, made it uſeleſs,
For ever doom'd to meet with diſregard.
E'er ſince the lovely viſionary raves
With dignity; foretells the fate of nations;
And, judging of the future from the paſt,
Has oft been wondrous happy in her gueſſes.
Some ſtrange, ſome recent inſtances of this,
Confirm her in her venerable madneſs.

Meliſ.

Meliſ. Be not too raſh in judging, *Agamemnon*;
For, we blind mortals, but a little know
Of boundleſs nature—Hark! the princeſs comes:
I hear her voice, I hear the voice of ſorrow.

SCENE II.

AGAMEMNON, MELISANDER, CASSANDRA, *attended by* Trojan *captives.*

Caſſ. [*entering*] O hoſtile roofs! O *Ilium*, O my country!

Agam. I cannot blame your grief, unhappy princeſs!
But, if it can relieve you, here be ſure
Of an aſylum, ſafe as *Priam*'s palace.

Caſſ. O ſweet abode! O palace of my fathers!
My bleeding heart melts while I think of thee;
Think of the days of innocence and joy,
That ſhone upon me there. How chang'd art thou!
Ah! what a ſcene, when I beheld thee laſt!
Rage, blood, and flames, and ſhrieks of murder round me!
The ſword of *Pyrrhus*, and a feeble father!
Where was you *Hector* then? Where all his ſons?
O *Priam*'s numerous race! what are you now
Become? Ah me! the deſolating Gods
Have laid their hands, their iron hands, upon us.

Agam. From paſt misfortunes, princeſs, turn your eye——

Caſſ. 'Tis true, the future may full well ſuffice.
Th' avenging ſiſters trace my footſteps ſtill,
The hunters ſtill purſue the trembling doe.
Where am I?—Gods!—Black heavy drops of blood
Run down the guilty walls—With the dun ſhades
Of night aſcending, lo! ſucceſſive troops
Of *Trojan* ghoſts are flocking to the banquet:

Permitted

Permitted by th' infernal Gods, they come,
To feaſt them with the horrors of this night,
To ſnuff the blood of victims—Ha! the car,
The gay triumphal car, is turn'd at once,
Into a mournful bier, that nods along,
Solemn and ſlow—Yes, *Troy* ſhall be aveng'd:
I ſhall the vengeance ſee; and yet not ſee
Thy light, returning *Phoebus*.

Agam. Fair *Caſſandra*,
Indulge no more theſe melancholy views,
Theſe viſions form'd by gloomy-minded grief.
We will each art, each tender art employ,
To ſooth your ſorrows, to reſtore your peace.
You come not to the proud unfeeling race
Of yeſterday: we know the turns of fortune;
Have drunk the cup, the wholeſome cup of ſufferings,
That not inflames but moderates the mind.
Then fear not, princeſs; let me call you daughter!
Your treatment ſhall be ſuch as well becomes
The dignity of woe, becomes the great,
The fair unhappy. Nought ſhall touch your honour.
I know, I feel your beauty: but here dwell
The Gods of hoſpitality and faith;
The hymeneal powers are honour'd here.
Yes, I will ſhield thee, equal with *Electra*,
With my lov'd daughter in thy friendſhip bleſt.

Caſſ. In ſpite of ſwelling tears that choak the way,
Of bitter tears by big remembrance ſhed,
I own thy goodneſs, thank thee, *Agamemnon*.
Mean-time in vain, are all thy generous cares,
On my account. The Gods of death will, ſoon,
Extend o'er me their all-protecting wing.
I ſhall not, long I ſhall not want protection:
But who, devoted prince, will give it thee?

Even

Even while we talk the ſecret wheels are turning,
That lift the vile, and lay the mighty low.
I pity thee, the houſe of *Pelops* pity:
Forgive me, *Troy:* I pity thy deſtroyers.

Enter an Officer.

Off. A meſſenger from *Arcas*, Sir——
Agam. 'Tis well.
To my apartment lead him—you, meanwhile,
[*To Meliſander.*]
Attend the princeſs; grace her with ſuch honours,
As ſuits her to receive, and me to give.

SCENE III.

CASSANDRA, CHORUS *of* Trojan *Captives*, MELISANDER.

Meliſ. Fair princeſs, ſtop theſe tears. Exert that beſt,
That nobleſt virtue, which can maſter fortune.
An equal mind.
Caſſ. Not for myſelf I weep!——
But, oh my dear companions! how for you
My boſom yearns!
Chor. We have together liv'd!
Together let us die!
Caſſ. Together liv'd!
At this ten thouſand images awake,
Ten thouſand little tenderneſſes throb.
Chor. O days of youth! O careleſs days! Untaught
To weep, if love ſhed not the pleaſing tear.
Caſſ. O woods! O fountains! O delightful meads!
That lent us flowers, the prime of blooming *May*,
To deck our treſſes,
Chor. O the yellow banks

Of

Of fair *Scamander!* in whoſe ſilver ſtream
We us'd to bath, beneath the ſecret ſhade.
Caſſ. O chearful *Ida*'s airy ſummits! where
The Gods delight to dwell.
Chor. O ſilent *Troy!*
Whoſe ſtreets have often echo'd with our ſong.
Caſſ. O the loſt labours of a ruin'd people!
O country! freedom! friends! relations! All,
That gives or taſte or dignity to life,
All, all is gone, beyond recovery gone!
Chor. Then let us die!
Caſſ. For me, the hunted hart
More fervent pants not for the cooling ſtream,
Than I to wrap me in the quiet ſhades
Of death. But, ah! my helpleſs friends, for you
I feel its keeneſt anguiſh.
Chor. Not for us,
Feel not for us. What comfort have we left?
What hope, what wiſh in life?—One healing pang,
And then we weep no more.
Caſſ. Refreſhing thought!
And then from bondage, pain, from every ill,
For ever free, we meet our friends again;
Our parents, brothers, ſiſters, lovers meet.
Chor. Then let us die! and ſudden be the blow!
Caſſ. The Gods aſſent.—Behold the happy ſhore!
But, ah! there lies a ſtormy ſea betwixt!
Meliſ. So ſings the plaining nightingale her woes.
Caſſ. Ah, far unlike the nightingale!—She ſings,
Unceaſing, thro' the balmy nights of *May*;
She ſings from love and joy, while we alas!——
Meliſ. Behold the queen.—Deep-wrap'd in thought
ſhe ſeems.————
Caſſ. O direful muſings!—Lead us from her preſence.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Sweet peace of mind! whence pleaſure borrows taſte,
Daughter of virtue! whither art thou fled?
To what calm cottage, to what blameleſs ſhade,
Far from theſe guilty walls? O walls! O race!
To horrors doom'd!—Before me gathers faſt
A deepning gloom, with unknown terrors big.—
Not quite unknown.—Gods! what a dreadful hint
Flaſh'd from *Egiſthus*, when I ſaw him laſt!
And to what deſperate actions cannot ſafety,
Ambition, love and vengeance drive the ſoul!—
Diſtraction lies that way—yet, how eſcape?
Shame urges on behind, unpitying ſhame,
That worſt of furies, whoſe fell aſpect frights
Each tender feeling from the human breaſt.
Goodneſs itſelf even turns in me to gall,
And only ſerves to heighten my deſpair.
How kind was *Agamemnon!* generous! fond!
How more than uſual mild! As if, on purpoſe,
To give theſe tortures their ſevereſt ſting.
Happy! compar'd to this tormented ſtate,
Where honour only lives with inward laſh
To puniſh guilt, happy the harden'd wretch,
Who feels no conſcience, and who fears no crime!—
Oh horrid! horrid! Oh flagitious thought!
How is it with the mind that can endure
A thought ſo dire!—My ſole remaining hope
Is death, kind death, that amiable ſleep,
Which wakes no more,—at leaſt to mortal care—
But then the dark Hereafter that may come.——

There

There is no anchor that againſt this ſtorm,
This mighty ſea of doubts and fears, can hold.
Hopeleſs, I drive.—One thought deſtroys another.—
This ſtranger too!—Should it be *Meliſander*—
Is there a fear, however idle, wild,
And even almoſt impoſſible, which guilt,
The feeble-hearted guilt not entertains?—
I ordered his attendance.—See, he comes.

SCENE V.

CLYTEMNESTRA, MELISANDER.

Clyt. Stranger, are you not he, whom *Agamemnon*,
By an amazing chance, in his return,
Sav'd from a deſart iſle?

Meliſ. Madam, the ſame.

Clyt. I much admire your fortunate deliverance,
And wiſh to hear your ſtory: why there left,
And how ſuſtain'd. Indulge me with it, ſtranger.

Meliſ. Madam, I come this moment from the king,
Charg'd with a matter which requires diſpatch:
But, that tranſacted once, without delay,
I will attend your orders.

Clyt. Then, it ſeems,
You are not quite a ſtranger in *Mycenae*.
What is your country?

Meliſ. Greece.

Clyt. What part of *Greece?*

Meliſ. At *Athens* I was born.

Clyt. But in *Mycenae*,
Have you not in *Mycenae* been before?

Meliſ. There are not, madam, many parts of *Greece*
To me unknown.

Clyt. Why thus avoid my queſtion?

Have

Have you been here before?

Meliſ. Madam, I have.

Clyt. Here in this palace?—Ha! why ſtand you
ſilent?
You keep your eyes unmov'd upon the ground.
What ſhould this mean? Beneath that rough diſguiſe
There lurks, methinks, a form, which ſomewhere I
Have ſeen.

Meliſ. The dream of fancy, that the more
It is indulg'd, perplexes ſtill the more.
I tarry here too long; the king's commands
Admit of no delay.

Clyt. 'Tis ſo! 'tis ſo!
Air, features, manner, voice, this ſtudy'd haſte,
The ſhifts of one unpractis'd in deceit,
All, all conſpire—One image wakes another,
And thick they flaſh upon me!

Meliſ. You grow pale,
You tremble, madam; that miſtake, I find,
Concerning me, turns wilder, and diſturbs you.
Let me retire—

Clyt. A moment—ſtay———

Meliſ. In vain,
I find it is in vain to wrap me longer
In theſe evaſions.

Clyt. Meliſander!

Meliſ. Madam———

Clyt. And can it be? Behold I then the man,
Whom I ſo long have number'd with the dead?
Almighty Gods! Behold I *Meliſander?*
But ah! how chang'd! how darken'd with ſuſpicion!
Yes I am deem'd the author of his woes.

Meliſ. Madam, forgive———

Clyt. Why elſe from me conceal
Your wiſh'd return—I plainly am diſtruſted———

By

By *Agamemnon* too—it was unkind,
Unjuſt, unfriendly, ſhocks me, *Meliſander.*
Meliſ. Indeed you wrong me, madam, wrong me much,
To judge me apt or to conceive or ſpread
Diſtruſt. I would have periſh'd by myſelf.
Unknown, unwept, in helpleſs ſolitude,
Rather than here return to this full world,
To ſet my miſtreſs and her lord at variance.
O think me not a buſy peace-deſtroyer!
Accurſed is the wretch, to ſocial life
The moſt inhuman foe, who in the nice,
The tender ſcenes of life, dares raſhly meddle,
And ſow diviſion between friends and lovers.
Clyt. The generous heart is ever ſlow to blame.
But, *Meliſander*, not to me were owing,
Not in the leaſt to me, thoſe cruel woes,
This worſe than death, which you ſo long have ſuffer'd.
Inſtead of that, your fate, how, whither gone,
If carry'd off, or ſecretly deſtroy'd,
Was all a mournful myſtery to me,
Dark as the night on which you diſappear'd.
Did you but know, here in my ſecret ſoul,
What undiſſembled pangs your abſence rouz'd,
What I have felt for you, and for myſelf,
In loſing ſuch a wife and faithful friend;
Knew you but theſe, O knew you, *Meliſander*,
How your diſtaſter has been truly mine,
You never could ſuſpect me.
Meliſ. Witneſs heav'n!
I never did—Your heart I know diſdains
A thought that looks like cruelty or fraud.
From the firſt moment that his ruffians ſeiz'd me,
I had no doubt, I knew it was *Egiſthus.*

Some

Some time before I mark'd the riſing ſtorm,
And meant to warn you, but it ſudden burſt,
And bore me far away, far from all means,
Even from all hope of lending you aſſiſtance.
Ay! there I ſuffer'd moſt. My fears for you,
At once by guile and violence beſet,
Took off the point of my own proper woes.
But when your awful virtues ſtruck my thought,
Your wiſdom, ſpirit, reſolution, truth;
That dread effulgence of the ſpotleſs ſoul,
Which ſmites the hardeſt villain into ſhame;
My fears appear'd impertinent and vain.
Yet doubtleſs, madam, you have had occaſion
For a firm ruling hand and watchful eye,
For every virtue; and I truly joy,
That *Agamemnon* finds at his return
Egiſthus by your conduct thus reſtrain'd.

Clyt. By heavens! he tries me—O ſuſpicious guilt!
[*Aſide.*]
Your words are friendly, but your deeds are doubtful.
No, *Meliſander*, friendſhip with diſtruſt
Can never dwell. And that I am diſtruſted
To me is certain—In a matter too,
That much concern'd my peace, concern'd my honour.
For did you even aſcribe your woes to me,
You could not manage with more diſtant caution.

Meliſ. Whence is it that the noble *Clytemneſtra*,
Who us'd to ſhine in a ſuperior ſphere
Of fair ſerenity and candid peace,
Should to theſe doubts deſcend, theſe dark ſuſpicions?
For me, I here atteſt the Gods, my ſoul
Ne'er knew a thought, that ſwell'd not with eſteem,
With love, and veneration of your virtues.
And for the king, no young enraptur'd lover,

In

In all the firſt effuſions of his ſoul,
New to the mighty charm; no friend, who meets,
After long years of dark and ſilent abſence,
His happy friend again, feels livelier joy
Than *Agamemnon* feels, while his glad tongue
Runs out in endleſs praiſe of *Clytemneſtra*——
But I muſt wait his orders.——

Clyt. Do your duty.
I too muſt go, muſt to *Egiſthus* ſtrait [*Aſide.*]
Impart this dreadful news.

SCENE VI.

MELISANDER *alone.*

She went abruptly———
And as we talk'd, methought, ſtrange paſſions ſhook
Her inward frame, and darken'd every feature.
Behold the black, the guilt-concealing night
Faſt cloſes round. Wide, thro' this ample palace.
The lamps begin to ſhine. The tempeſt falls;
The weary winds ſink, breathleſs. But, who knows,
What fiercer tempeſt yet may ſhake this night?
Soul-chearing *Phoebus*, with thy ſacred beams
O quickly come, and chaſe theſe ſullen ſhadows.

ACT V. SCENE I.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS.

Egiſt. AH *Clytemneſtra!* what a change is here!
And muſt I then thus ſteal an interview?
Are we alone?

Clyt.

Clyt. You fright me with that queſtion:
You look aſtoniſh'd.
Egiſt. On the brink of ruin
We, tottering, ſtand.
Clyt. That is no news to me.
Egiſt. But———
Clyt. What?
Egiſt. We are diſcover'd.
Clyt. Ha! diſcovered.
Egiſt. Yes certainly diſcover'd. *Arcas* now,
By *Agamemnon*'s orders, in the city,
Collects a band to ſeize me at the banquet,
A ſhort hour hence. And my accuſers, madam,
You may be well aſſur'd are not your friends.
Clyt. 'Tis plain! 'tis plain!—The parting fogs diſperſe:
And now the doubtful ſcene ſtands all reveal'd—
Who could have thought they ſhould diſſemble thus?
But I can tell you more.
Egiſt. What, madam? ſpeak;
For danger preſſes on us.
Clyt. Saw you him,
This ſeeming ſtranger, ſav'd by *Agamemnon*.
Egiſt. *Arcas* and he to day, my friends inform me,
Were buſy with the king; and doubtleſs, then,
It was concerted that I ſhould be ſeiz'd.
Clyt. Ah! did you know, *Egiſthus*, who he is?—
Egiſt. Who?
Clyt. *Meliſander*.
Egiſt. Gods! and does he live?
For my confuſion ſav'd! O groſs, groſs folly!
To do an action of that kind by halves.
Had he been ſilent duſt—To pleaſe you, madam,
From a falſe tenderneſs for you, he lives—

Clyt. A mighty merit! glorious boaſt indeed!
Hear him, ye gracious gentle powers of love!
From tenderneſs for me, he did not murder
A worthy blameleſs man, who never hurt him;
He murder'd not my friend, my faithful friend.
Ah! 'tis ſuch tenderneſs that makes me wretched;
Such tenderneſs that ſtill in blacker guilt,
In the laſt depth of miſery, will plunge me.
Egiſt. It is not, madam, now a time for this.
Think of our ſituation: cloſe beſet
By all thoſe ills which mortals moſt abhor,
Whom have we to confide in but each other?
And this ſad meeting is perhaps our laſt.
Concord alone, and vigorous meaſures, can
Prevent our ruin—But, from *Meliſander*,
What did you learn? Are you yourſelf ſuſpected?
Clyt. I cannot find I am:—and yet I muſt.
Egiſt. But, as for me, my ruin is no ſecret.
Clyt. 'Tis true, ſome dark attempt goes on againſt you.
Egiſt. Then I have rightly done.
Clyt. What have you done?
Egiſt. What prudence, juſtice, love and vengeance, all
Demand———
Clyt. Immortal powers! you have not?
Egiſt. No.
But muſt, and will—What elſe can you propoſe?
Clyt. Oh, any thing beſides! immediate flight,
Eternal abſence, death!—
Egiſt. Let others die!
Let the proud, faithleſs, falſe, injurious tyrant;
The hero glorious in his daughter's murder;
The ſcourge of *Greece*, who has, from wild ambition,
Shed

Shed ſo much blood—let *Agamemnon* die!

Clyt. Oh heavens and earth, you ſhock me to diſtraction!

I have, *Egiſthus*, hitherto avoided
This dreadful point, ſtill hoping you might drop
Your horrid reſolution: now I tell you,
Before the liſtening Gods, I plainly tell you,
That *Agamemnon* ſhall not fall unwarn'd:
You ſhall not riſe by me into his throne:
I will not be the tool of your ambition;
Will not be wretched, infamous for ever,
The bluſh of women, the diſgrace of nature,
That you may gain your execrable views,
Maſk'd under ſmooth pretences.—I am guilty,
Alas! I am—But think not therefore, tyrant!
To give me law. There are degrees in guilt;
And I have ſtill my reaſon left, have left
Some reſolution, ſome remains of virtue:
Yes, I dare die; and who dares die, *Egiſthus*
Need not be driven to villainous extremes!
Mark me, inſulting man!—My certain cure
Of every woe, my cordial draught is ready;
And if you do not promiſe me, here ſwear
To drop your fell deſigns on *Agamemnon*,
To quit this palace—You may ſtill eſcape—
And never ſee me more; I go, I go,
This moment to diſcover all, and die!

Egiſt. What *Clytemneſtra!*

Clyt. Nothing ſhall diſſuade me.
I will not argue more—Say, only ſay,
Muſt I betake me to this cruel refuge?
This dire neceſſity?

Egiſt. Permit me, madam;
Hear me but once, and then purſue your purpoſe.

Suppoſe us guilty, what you will;—yet, madam,
Shall we acknowledge and proclaim that guilt?
Shall we, by patient waiting for our doom,
By pitiful neglect of ſelf-defence,
Unheard-of meanneſs! ſtamp it into ſhame?
No; let us wipe it out with bold ſucceſs.
It is ſucceſs that colours all in life:
Succeſs makes fools admir'd, makes villains honeſt;
All the proud virtue of this vaunting world
Fawns on ſucceſs, and power, howe'er acquir'd.
If then, ſuppoſing guilt, it were a meanneſs
To ſtoop to ſhame, can words expreſs the madneſs
Of ſtopping ſhort, with infamy and ruin,
When, juſtice, love, and vengeance, urge to glory?
Inſtead of being deem'd a generous queen,
The brave avenger of her ſex's honour,
Fam'd for her ſpirit, for her juſt reſentment;
Who greatly puniſh'd a perfidious huſband,
A cruel tyrant; one, who from his bed,
His throne, propos'd, with open ſhame, to turn her,
And to her place to take his country's foe,
To take a *Trojan* captive, proud *Caſſandra:*
Inſtead of ſuch renown, can *Clytemneſtra*—
Forgive the doubt—Can ſhe ſubmit to paſs,
Thro' future times, for an abandon'd woman?
A feeble, ſpiritleſs, abandon'd woman!——
Nay, madam, hear the truth, what now I tell you
Muſt, in a little ſcanty hour, take place;
In a few moments you muſt be the firſt
Or laſt of women; be the public ſcorn,
Or admiration of approving *Greece*—
You know you muſt;—be *Agamemnon*'s ſlave,
Caſſandra's ſlave, or nobly puniſh both,
And reign with me in happineſs and glory.

Conſult

Conſult your heart; can you reſolve on ſhame?
On voluntary ſhame? That only ill
The generous fear, which kills the ſoul itſelf.
Were thoſe fair features, full of lovely grandeur,
Form'd for confuſion? That majeſtic front
To be bow'd down with infamy and vileneſs?
Ah! can you bear contempt? The venom'd tongue
Of thoſe whom ruin pleaſes? The keen ſneer,
The lewd reproaches of the raſcal herd;
Who for the ſelf-ſame actions, if ſucceſsful,
Would be as groſly laviſh in your praiſe?
To ſum up all in one—Can you ſupport
The ſcornful glances, the malignant joy,
Or more deteſted pity of a rival?
Of a triumphant rival?—No; you cannot.
That conſcious worth, which kindles in your eye,
Tells me you cannot.—
But in vain diſputes
No more to ſquander theſe important moments;
Know, that I have not, to the frail deciſion
Of wav'ring fear and female weakneſs left
Our freedom, ſafety, happineſs and honour.
Even in your own deſpite you ſhall be ſav'd.
And could you be ſo loſt to reaſon, wild,
To do what woman never did before,
What ſhocks humanity, accuſe yourſelf;
You only court diſhonour to no purpoſe:
For *Agamemnon* now cannot eſcape;
I am already maſter of this palace;
All is prepar'd, my people all are fix'd,
All properly diſpos'd; aud here I ſwear,
By ſacred juſtice, glory, love and vengeance!
He dies!—dies in the bath, before the banquet!—
And with him dies *Caſſandra*, ſhe, who dares,

In her preſumptuous thought, uſurp thy honours.
She weeps!—O my ador'd! my *Clytemneſtra!*
Forgive this barbarous neceſſary truth!
Did I not love thee, love thee more than empire,
Than life and glory, would I thus diſcloſe
Theſe dangerous ſecrets? Could I not have veil'd,
And, with morē certain caution, gain'd my purpoſe?
Clyt. Oh that you had, *Egiſthus!* then, alas!
I ſhould have fondly thought myſelf leſs guilty.
Egiſt. I loſe myſelf in ſoftneſs, while the time,
With danger big, demands intrepid deeds.
Wipe off theſe tears—When next we meet again,
All will be well.

SCENE II.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah! when we meet again!—
I ſtand, at laſt, convinc'd, and muſt diſſemble—
Yet how diſſemble? Painted, in my face,
Are the full horrors of this bloody deed.—
But who are theſe approaching?—Ha! *Caſſandra?*
How fair ſhe ſeems! how lovely!—hateful charms!
That well may rival mine, decay'd, and ſunk
By guilt and ſorrow—She poſſeſs my bed!
Poſſeſs my ſceptre!—This reſtores my ſpirit;
I am abus'd! too patient!—Periſh all!
Periſh myſelf, *Egiſthus*, *Agamemnon!*
So this proud rival, this *Caſſandra* periſh!

SCENE

SCENE III.

CASSANDRA, Trojan *captives*, MELISANDER.

Meliſ. Daughters of *Ilium!* By the king's command,
I come to aſk your preſence at the banquet.
Till then allow me to partake your woes:
I have a reverence for them. I myſelf,
Thanks to the gracious Gods! have known misfortune;
I am with grief acquainted; therefore can
For others feel. Sweet ſource of every virtue,
O ſacred ſorrow! He who knows not thee,
Knows not the beſt emotions of the heart,
Thoſe tender tears that humanize the ſoul,
The ſigh that charms, the pang that gives delight;
He dwells too near to cruelty and pride,
And is a novice in the ſchool of virtue.

Caſſ. We thank thee, ſtranger, for thy generous pity.
Heaven has, it ſeems, throughout diffus'd the good.
May the kind Gods, the hoſpitable powers,
For this befriend thee! Thou muſt wander ſtill,
Wilt their protection want.—But *Agamemnon!*
Where is the king?

Meliſ. He bathes him for the banquet,
The banquet earn'd by ten years war and toil.

Caſſ. Short-ſighted man! to dream of feſtal joy,
When his next banquet is perhaps with *Pluto.*
He comes! the God comes ruſhing on my ſoul!
O gently ſooth me with the voice of muſic!
Aſſuage my pangs with harmony!—Methinks
I hear *Apollo*'s lyre.

Meliſ. Myſterious powers!

Caſſ. 'Tis gone—And now harſh diſcord takes its place:
Dire yellings now affright my trembling ear.
What means this uproar of the howling foreſt?
The lioneſs and wolf, together leagu'd,
Purſue the lion's life.—Behold! the ſnare,
Th' infernal ſnare is ſet, ſpread by the ſtream,
Where, unſuſpecting harm, he bathes at noon.
Soon will theſe guiltleſs waters bluſh with blood.

Meliſ. There is a ſort of gloomy light in this,
That flaſhes horror on me.

Caſſ. A black ſwarm
Of fell ideas ſeize my fancy.—Hence!
O ſnatch me from this palace! ſhambles rather!
It ſmells of carnage; breathes a hideous ſteam!
As if from gaping ſepulchres exhal'd.
And, lo! the ſpotleſs loves, the ſports, the joys,
The weeping *Lares* fly; while in their place,
The vices, all the raging furies come?
And with them *Comus*, the fluſh'd God of banquets,
Beſmear'd with gore—They ſing the funeral hymn—
What do I ſee? What mean theſe mangled forms?
Theſe pale, theſe nightly phantoms; ſuch as riſe,
To working fancy's eye, in troubled dreams?—
See! where they ſit for ever at the gates,
Demanding vengeance—Vengeance is at hand——
Ha! 'tis the murder'd boys, whoſe limbs were, here,
Serv'd up to their own ſire, to be devour'd!

Meliſ. She wakes my dread—The ſtory of *Thyeſtes!*

Caſſ. With this devoted race involv'd I fall:
Nor falls the ſlave alone—The maſter falls.
But man ſhall die for man, for woman woman:
Remember this.

Meliſ. The ſlave, the maſter fall!

Caſſ. Ah

Caſſ. Ah boſom-traitreſs! Ill-perſuaded queen!
And canſt thou then the barbarous ſecret keep?—
Meliſ. What queen? what ſecret? Speak more plain, *Caſſandra!*
Caſſ. From guilt, in vain, to greater guilt you fly,
From crime to crime precipitated—No?
The wicked find no peace—Diſtraction waits thee!
One effort more—Yes, ſave thy lord, and die—
That throw belong'd to virtue—Cannot then
The gentle powers prevail?—A moment yet,
The doubtful balance yet allows a moment—
Down, down it goes, for vengeance and for *Troy!*
But ah! ſuch vengeance, as even foes themſelves
Abhor to ſee!
Meliſ. She ſtaggers all my reaſon.
Unveil theſe dreadful oracles—Perhaps—
Caſſ. Yes, in a moment, they will be too plain.
The moment comes!—The furies laſh it on!
Ha! Now!
Meliſ. Unuſual horror creeps—
Caſſ. Alas!
Keep from the murderous ſacrificer's hand,
O keep the victim bull! Lo! ſeiz'd, he ſpurns,
He foams in vain—Behold the lifted blow!
Behold the thirſty ſteel! They ſtrike him!—Hark!
What diſmal echoes run from room to room!
Meliſ. I heard a diſtant noiſe!—

[*The noiſe of* Agamemnon's *aſſaſſination heard indiſtinctly, and at a diſtance, behind the ſcenes.*]

Caſſ. Again!—They ſtrive,
Th' aſſaſſins labour who ſhall wound him moſt.
'Tis done!—He falls!—

AGAMEMNON, *behind the ſcenes.*

[*The noiſe heard diſtinctly, and near.*]

Off! villains! cowards! off!—

By villains murder'd!—Oh!

Meliſ. Great Gods! the king!—

SCENE IV.

MELISANDER, CASSANDRA, Trojan *captives*, ELECTRA, ORESTES.

Elec. Stop, generous ſtranger! *Agamemnon*'s friend!

Meliſ. What would *Electra?* what with *Meliſander?*

Elec. Heavens! *Meliſander!*

Meliſ. To the king's aſſiſtance

I fly; detain me not.

Elec. He is no more!

Meliſ. Ha! dead?

Elec. Yes, murder'd by *Egiſthus!* dead!

Pierc'd with a thouſand wounds! O horror! horror!—

We have not time for grief—*Oreſtes*—quick!

Fly! ſave my brother!

Oreſt. Leave my father!—No!

It is but once that I have ever ſeen him,

Shall I no more?

Elec. But to revenge his death,

O fly, *Oreſtes*, for that glorious purpoſe!

Tremendous Gods! Methinks I ſee his ghoſt.

That beckons you away!

Oreſt. I come! I come!

On, *Meliſander*—

Elec. Brother!

Oreſt. Oh, my ſiſter!

What will become of thee?

Elec. Good

Elec. Good *Meliſander*,
O guard my brother! ſave our only hope!—
I heard a noiſe—Farewell!
Oreſt. [*going.*] Ah! poor *Electra!*

SCENE V.

ELECTRA, CASSANDRA, Trojan *captives.*

Elec. The murderers come! ſtain'd with my father's blood!
Hide me, *Caſſandra*, hide me from a ſight
I cannot bear, a ſcene to nature ſhocking!

SCENE VI.

The back-ſcene opening diſcovers, at a diſtance, Agamemnon's *body.* Electra *throws herſelf by it.*

CASSANDRA, Trojan *captives*, EGISTHUS, *with ſome of his party.*

Egiſt. Enough, my friends!—How low, how ſilent, now,
The mighty boaſter lyes!—Another blow
Crowns my revenge.——
Caſſ. It ſhall not, baſe aſſaſſin!
The Gods are juſt; amidſt the crimes of men,
Are firmly juſt, ſupremely wiſe and good:
The Gods are here, in all their terrors preſent!
See where in dreadful majeſty they ſit!
And write thy doom in *Agamemnon*'s blood!
Egiſt. Think not to ſhake me with theſe gloomy fables:
This arm, that has acquir'd, ſhall guard my power;
And ſince I now enjoy my long-wiſh'd vengeance,

All

All here is calm and chearful.

Caſſ. The falſe boaſt
Of agonizing guilt! Thy ſoul, I ſee,
Beneath this harden'd pride, this brutal courage,
Boils with black torments, and with inward tempeſt.
I know whence breaks that gleam of joy athwart thee,
As lightning flaſhes o'er a troubled ſky:
Thou dream'ſt the prince now falls beneath thy fury:
But hear and tremble—young *Oreſtes* lives!

Egiſt. Hence with thy vain predictions, doating woman!——

SCENE VII.

EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA, *&c. and to them Aſſaſſins ſent to murder* ORESTES.

Egiſt. Well, is *Oreſtes* dead?

Aſſ. Ah, Sir! eſcap'd—
When all was in confuſion here and tumult.

Egiſt. O nothing then is done!—Fly! tardy villains!
Purſue him to the fartheſt verge of earth,—
No dark retreat, no country.—But here comes
Another ſtorm. Diſtraction wings her pace.

SCENE VIII.

CLYTEMNESTRA, EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA.

Clyt. Off! give me way! to deſarts let me fly!
The wildeſt ſavage there!———
Why pierce me thus with looks?—In every eye
There is a dagger; chief in thine [*to Egiſthus*]—Ha! villain!
I know thee; know theſe eyes, where ſmiling love
To the red glarings of a fury's torch

Is

Is now transform'd.—Yes, traitor! turn away:
But, ere you go, give me my peace again;
Give me my happy family around;
Give me my virtue, honour, nay my glory;
Or give me death, tho' death cannot relieve me.—
Are theſe the deeds of love? I cannot ſtep,
Unleſs I dip my ſhivering feet in blood.
Compar'd with this polluted, this dire palace,
The ſepulchre is gay.—But whither fly?
Ah! what avails it where the guilty fly,
Since from themſelves they cannot!—Ha! behold!
The black abyſs diſcloſes to my view;
And down I go, a dark and deep deſcent!——
Hell from beneath is mov'd at my approach:
Its princes flock around. Behold, they ſay,
The greatly-wretched, greatly-wicked woman!
She who preferr'd the villain to the hero.
The *Trojan* ſhades, with ſharp deriſion, thank me:
The *Grecian* droop—Lo! where he comes himſelf!
See! how in ſullen majeſty he ſtalks!—
Oh look not on me with that ſilent ſcorn!
I am too curs'd already!

[*Faints into the arms of her attendants*

Egiſt. Bear her hence:
And look ſhe be attended well.—But hark!
What new alarm?

SCENE IX.

EGISTHUS, CASSANDRA, *&c. to them a* MESSENGER.

Meſſ. As *Meliſander*, Sir,
Bore off *Oreſtes*, to th' aſſembled ſenate
He ſhow'd the prince, and rous'd them to revenge.
'Tis nought but rage. The people, in a torrent,

By

By *Arcas* headed, pour upon the palace.
Beſides, each moment, *Agamemnon*'s troops——
Egiſt. Quick! ſummon here my friends—In *Io*'s grove
They ready wait. We this important day
Will or with conqueſt crown, or bravely die.
Caſſ. No, tyrant, no! the Gods refuſe thee that:
Not like the brave, but like the trembling coward,
Th' aſſaſſinating coward, thou ſhalt die;
There! in that ſpot, where *Agamemnon* lies!
Egiſt. Lead theſe ill-boding women to their fate;
And guard *Electra.*
Caſſ. The moſt grateful gift
A tyrant can beſtow is inſtant death.
We ſhall be happy ſoon. But all the Gods,
Combining all their mercy, from remorſe,
From ſcorn and miſery, cannot ſave the villain.

END *of the* FIFTH ACT.

EPI-

ALFRED:

A

MASQUE.

Repreſented before their Royal Highneſſes the PRINCE and PRINCESS of *Wales*, at *Cliffden*, on the firſt of *Auguſt*, 1740.

By Mr. THOMSON and Mr. MALLET.

Si velimus cum priorum temporum *neceſſitate certare, vincemur. Ingenioſior eſt enim ad* excogitandum *ſimulatio, veritate; ſervitus, libertate; metus, amore.*

PLIN. Pan. TRAJAN.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. CIBBER.

OUR bard, to modern epilogue a foe,
Thinks ſuch mean mirth but deadens generous woe;
Diſpels in idle air the moral ſigh,
And wipes the tender tear from pity's eye:
No more with ſocial warmth the boſom burns;
But all th' unfeeling ſelfiſh man returns.

***

Thus he began:—And you approv'd the ſtrain;
'Till the next couplet ſunk to light and vain.
You check'd him there.—To you, to reaſon juſt,
He owns he triumph'd in your kind diſguſt.
Charm'd by your frown, by your diſpleaſure grac'd,
He hails the riſing virtue of your taſte.
Wide will its influence ſpread as ſoon as known:
Truth, to be lov'd, needs only to be ſhown.
Confirm it, once, the faſhion to be good:
(Since faſhion leads the fool, and awes the rude)
No petulance ſhall wound the public ear;
No hand applaud what honour ſhuns to hear:
No painful bluſh the modeſt cheek ſhall ſtain;
The worthy breaſt ſhall heave with no diſdain.
Chaſtis'd to decency, the Britiſh *ſtage*
Shall oft invite the fair, invite the ſage:
Both ſhall attend well-pleas'd, well-pleas'd depart;
Or if they doom the verſe, abſolve the heart.

* Another epilogue was ſpoken after the firſt repreſentation of the play, which began with the firſt ſix lines of this: but the reſt of that epilogue having been very juſtly diſliked by the audience, this was ſubſtituted in its place.

The ARGUMENT.

After the Danes *had made themſelves maſters of* Chippenham, *the ſtrongeſt city in the kingdom of* Weſſex; Alfred *was at once abandoned by all his ſubjects. In this univerſal defection, that monarch found himſelf obliged to retire into the little iſle of* Athelney *in* Somerſetſhire; *a place then rough with woods, and of difficult acceſs. There, in the habit of a peaſant, he lived unknown, for ſome time, in a ſhepherd's cottage. He is ſuppoſed to be found in this retreat by the Earl of* Devon; *whoſe caſtle, upon the river* Tau, *was then beſieged by the* Danes.

The Perſons repreſented.

ALFRED,	Mr. Milward.
ELTRUDA,	Mrs. Horton.
HERMIT,	Mr. Quin.
EARL of *Devon*,	Mr. Mills.
CORIN, a ſhepherd,	Mr. Salway.
EMMA, his wife,	Mrs. Clive.

A Bard, Soldiers, Spirits.

The SCENE *repreſents a plain, ſurrounded with woods. On one ſide a cottage: on the other, flocks and herds in diſtant proſpect. A hermit's cave in full view, overhung with trees, wild and groteſque.*

ALFRED:

A

MASQUE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

CORIN, EMMA.

Em. SHEPHERD, 'tis he. Beneath yon aged oak,
All on the flowery turf he lays him down.
Cor. Soft: let us not diſturb him. Gentle *Emma*,
Poor tho' he be, unfriended and unknown,
My pity waits with reverence on his fortune.
Modeſt of carriage, and of ſpeech moſt gracious,
As if ſome ſaint or angel, in diſguiſe,
Had grac'd our lowly cottage with his preſence,
He ſteals, I know not how, into the heart,
And makes it pant to ſerve him. Truſt me, *Emma*,
He is no common man.
Em. Some lord, perhaps,
Or valiant chief, that from our deadly foe,
The haughty, cruel, unbelieving *Dane*,
Seeks ſhelter here.
Cor. And ſhelter he ſhall find.
Who loves his country, is my friend and brother.
Behold him well. Fair virtue in his aſpect,
Even thro' the homely ruſſet that conceals him,

Shines

Shines forth and proves him noble. Seeſt thou, *Emma*,
Yon weſtern clouds? The ſun they ſtrive to hide,
Yet darts his beams around.

Em. Your thought is mine,
He is not what his preſent fortunes ſpeak him,
But, ah! the raging foe is all around us:
We dare not keep him here.

Cor. Content thee, wife:
This iſland is of ſtrength. Nature's own hand
Hath planted round a deep defence of woods,
The ſounding aſh, the mighty oak; each tree
A ſheltering grove: and choak'd up all between
With wild encumbrance of perplexing thorns,
And horrid brakes. Beyond this woody verge,
Two rivers broad and rapid hem us in,
Along their channel ſpreads the gulphy pool,
And trembling quagmire, whoſe deceitful green
Betrays the foot it tempts. One path alone
Winds to this plain, ſo roughly difficult,
This ſingle arm, poor ſhepherd as I am,
Could well diſpute it with twice twenty *Danes*.

Em. Yet think, my *Corin*, on the ſtern decree
Of that proud foe; "Who harbours or relieves
"An *Engliſh* captain, dies the death of traitors:
"But who their haunts diſcovers, ſhall be ſafe,
"And high rewarded."

Cor. Now, juſt heaven forbid,
A *Britiſh* man ſhould ever count for gain
What villainy muſt earn. No: are we poor?
Be honeſty our riches. Are we mean,
And humble born? The true heart makes us noble.
Theſe hands can toil, can ſow the ground and reap
For thee and thy ſweet babes. Our daily labour
Is daily wealth: it finds us bread and raiment.

Could

Could *Daniſh* gold give more? And for the death
Theſe tyrants threaten, let me rather meet it,
Than e'er betray my gueſt.

Em. Alas the while,
That loyal faith is fled from hill and bower,
To dwell with village-ſwains!

Cor. Ah look! behold!
Where, like ſome goodly tree by wintry winds
Torn from the roots and withering, our ſad gueſt
Lies on the ground diffus'd.

Em. I weep to ſee it.

Cor. Thou haſt a heart ſweet pity loves to dwell in.
Dry up thy tears? and lean on this juſt hope:
If yet to do away his country's ſhame,
To ſerve her bravely on ſome bleſt occaſion,
If for theſe ends this ſtranger ſought our cottage,
The heavenly hoſts are hovering here unſeen,
To watch and to protect him.—But oh! when——
My heart burns for it—ſhall I ſee the hour
Of vengeance on thoſe *Daniſh* Infidels,
That war with heaven and us?

Em. Alas, my love!
Theſe paſſions are not for the poor man's ſtate.
To heaven and to the rulers of the land
Leave ſuch ambitious thoughts. Be warn'd, my *Corin*,
And think our little all depends on thee.

SONG.

O Peace! the faireſt child of heaven,
To whom the ſylvan reign was given,
The vale, the fountain and the grove,
With every ſofter ſcene of love:
Return, ſweet peace! and chear the weeping ſwain:
Return, with Eaſe and Pleaſure in thy train.

Cor.

Cor. Huſh: ceaſe thy ſong—For ſee, our mournful gueſt
Has rais'd his head—and lo! who comes to greet him;
His friend the woodman of the neighbouring dale,
Whom late, as yeſter evening-ſtar aroſe,
At his requeſt I found, and hither brought.

SCENE II.

ALFRED, *Earl of* DEVON.

Alf. How long, O ever-gracious heaven! how long
Shall war thus deſolate this proſtrate land?
All, all is loſt—And *Alfred* lives to tell it!
His cities laid in duſt! his ſubjects ſlaughter'd
Or into ſlaves debas'd! the murderous foe
Proud and exulting in the general ſhame!——
Are theſe things ſo? and he without the means
Of great revenge? caſt down below the hope
Of ſuccouring thoſe he weeps for? O deſpair!
O grief of griefs!

Dev. Old as I am, my liege,
In rough war harden'd, and with death familiar,
Theſe eyes have long forgot to melt with ſoftneſs:
But O, my gracious maſter, they have ſeen—
All-pitying heaven!—ſuch ſights of ruthleſs rage,
Of total deſolation—

Alf. O my people!
O ruin'd *England!*—*Devon*, thoſe were bleſt,
Who dy'd before this time. Ha! and thoſe robbers,
That violate the ſanctity of leagues,
The reverend ſeal of oaths; that baſely broke,
Like nightly ruffians, on the hour of peace,
And ſtole a victory from men unarm'd,
Thoſe *Danes* enjoy their crimes! Dread vengeance!
ſon!

Of

Of power and juſtice! come, array'd in terrors,
Thy garment red with blood, thy keen ſword drawn:
O come, and on the heads of faithleſs men
Pour ample retribution; men whoſe triumph
Upbraids eternal juſtice.—But no more:
Submiſſion is heaven's due.—I will not launch
Into that dark abyſs where thought muſt drown.
Proceed, my lord: on with the mournful tale,
My griefs broke off.

Dev. From yonder heath-crown'd hill,
This iſland's eaſtern point, where in one ſtream
The *Thone* and *Parret* roll their blending waves,
I look'd and ſaw the progreſs of the foe,
As of ſome tempeſt, ſome devouring fire,
That ruins without mercy where it ſpreads.
The riches of the year, the golden grain
That liberal crown'd our plains, lyes trampled wide
By hoſtile feet, or rooted up; and waſte
Deforms the broad high-way. From ſpace to ſpace,
Far as my ſtraining eye could ſhoot its beam,
Trees, cottages, and caſtles, ſmoak to heaven
In one aſcending cloud. But oh for pity!
That way, my lord, where yonder verdant height
Declining ſlides into a fruitful vale,
Unſightly now and bare; a few poor hinds,
Grey-hair'd, and thinly clad, ſtood and beheld
The common ravage: motionleſs and mute,
With hands to heaven uprais'd, they ſtood, and wept—
My tears attended theirs——

Alf. If this ſad ſight
Could pain thee to ſuch anguiſh, what muſt I,
Their king and parent, feel?—It is a torment
Beyond the ſtrength of patience to endure.
Why end not I at once this wretched being?

The means are in my hand.—But ſhall a prince
Thus poorly ſhroud him in the grave from pain,
And ſenſe of ſhame? The madman, nay the coward,
Has often dar'd the ſame. A monarch holds
His life in truſt for others. I will live then:
Let heaven diſpoſe the reſt.

Dev. Thrice-noble *Alfred*,
And *England*'s only hope, whoſe virtues raiſe
Our frail mortality, our human duſt,
Up to angelic ſplendor and perfection;
With you to bear the worſt of ills, the ſpoil
Of waſteful war, the loſs of life or freedom,
Is happineſs, is glory.

Alf. Ah, look round thee:
That mud-built cottage is thy ſovereign's palace.
Yon hind, whoſe daily toil is all his wealth,
Lodges and feeds him. Are theſe times for flattery,
Or call it praiſe? ſuch gaudy attributes
Would miſbecome our beſt and proudeſt fortunes.
But what are mine? what is this high-prais'd *Alfred?*
Among ten thouſand wretches, moſt undone.
That prince who ſees his country laid in ruins,
His ſubjects periſhing beneath the ſword
Of foreign rage, who ſees and cannot ſave them,
Is but ſupreme in miſery!

Dev. My liege,
Who has not known ill fortune, never knew
Himſelf, or his own virtue. Be of comfort:
We can but die at laſt. Till that hour comes,
Let noble anger keep our hopes alive.
A ſudden thought, as if from heaven inſpir'd,
Darts on my ſoul. One caſtle ſtill is ours,
Tho' cloſe begirt and ſhaken by the *Danes*,
In this diſguiſe, my chance of paſſing on,

O

Of entering there unknown, is promiſing,
And wears a lucky face. 'Tis our laſt ſtake,
And I will play it like a man whoſe life,
Whoſe honour hangs upon a ſingle caſt.
Meanwhile my lord———
Alf. Ha! *Devon*, thou haſt rous'd
My ſlumbering virtue. I applaud thy thought.
The praiſe of this brave daring ſhall be thine:
The danger ſhall be common. We will both
Strait tempt the *Daniſh* camp, and gain this fort;
To animate our brothers of the war,
Thoſe *Engliſhmen* who yet deſerve that name.
And hear, eternal Juſtice! if my life
Can make atonement for them, King of kings!
Accept thy willing victim. On my head
Be all their woes: to them be grace and mercy.
Come on, my noble friend.
Dev. Ah, good my liege,
What fits a private valor, and might grace
The ſimple ſoldier's courage, would proclaim
His general's raſhneſs. You are *England*'s king:
Your infant children, and your much-lov'd queen;
Nay more, the public weal, ten thouſand ſouls,
Whoſe hope you are, whoſe all depends on you,
Forbid this enterprize. 'Tis nobler virtue
To check this ardor, to reſerve your ſword
For ſome great day of known and high import;
That to your country, to the judging world
Shall juſtify all hazards you may run.
This trial ſuits but me.
Alf. Well, go, my friend;
If thou ſhalt proſper, thou wilt call me hence
To head my people from their fears recover'd.
May that good angel, who inſpir'd thy thought,

Throw round thy ſteps a veil of cloudy air,
That thou may'ſt walk inviſible and ſafe.
He's gone—and now without a friend to aid me,
I ſtand alone, abandon'd to the gloom
Of my ſad thoughts—Said I without a friend?
Oh blaſphemous diſtruſt! Have I not Thee,
All-powerful friend and guardian of the righteous,
Have I not Thee to aid me? Let that thought
Support my drooping ſoul.—But, liſt. Ha! whence
Theſe air-born notes that ſound in meaſur'd ſweetneſs
Thro' this vaſt ſilence?

SCENE III.

Solemn muſic is heard at a diſtance. It comes nearer in a full ſymphony: after which a ſingle trumpet ſounds a high and awakening air. Then the following ſtanzas are ſung by two aërial ſpirits unſeen.

Firſt SPIRIT.

Hear, Alfred, *father of the ſtate,*
Thy genius heaven's high will declare!
What proves the hero truly great,
Is never, never to deſpair:
Is never to deſpair.

Second SPIRIT.

Thy hope awake, thy heart expand
With all its vigor, all its fires.
Ariſe! and ſave a ſinking land!
Thy country calls, and heaven inſpires.

Both SPIRITS.

Earth calls, and heaven inſpires.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

ALFRED *alone.*

All hail, ye gentle miniſters of heaven!
Your ſong inſpires new patience thro' my breaſt,
And generous hope: it wings my mounting ſoul
Above th' entangling maſs of earthly paſſions,
That keep frail man, tho' ſtruggling to be free,
Still fluttering in the duſt.

SCENE V.

ALFRED, *the* HERMIT *advancing from his cave.*

Alf. Thrice-happy Hermit!
Whom thus the heavenly habitants attend,
Bleſſing thy calm retreat; while ruthleſs war
Fills the polluted land with blood and crimes.
In this extremity of *England*'s fate,
Led by thy ſacred character, I come
For comfort and advice. Thy aged wiſdom,
Purg'd from the ſtormy cloud of human paſſions,
And by a ray from heaven exalted, ſees
Deep through futurity. Say what remains,
What yet remains to ſave our proſtrate country?
Nor ſcorn this anxious queſtion even from me,
A nameleſs ſtranger.

Her. Alfred, England's king,
All hail! and welcome to this humble cell.

Alf. Whence doſt thou know me, venerable father?

Her. Laſt night, when, with a draught from that cool fountain,
I had my wholſome, ſober ſupper crown'd;
As is my ſtated cuſtom, forth I walk'd,

Beneath the ſolemn gloom and glittering ſky,
To feed my ſoul with prayer and meditation.
And thus to inward harmony compos'd,
That ſweeteſt muſic of the grateful heart,
Whoſe each emotion is a ſilent hymn,
I to my couch retir'd. Strait on mine eyes
A pleaſing ſlumber fell, whoſe myſtic power
Seal'd up my ſenſes, but enlarg'd my ſoul.
At once, diſclos'd amid the dark waſte night,
Appear'd a viſion—not the dream of fancy,
But ſent from heaven, prophetic and divine.
For know, this ample element contains
Unnumber'd ſpiritual beings, or malign,
Or good to man. Theſe, when the groſſer eye
Of nature ſleeps, oft play their ſeveral parts,
As on a ſcene, before th' attentive mind,
And to the favour'd man diſcloſe the future.
Led by theſe ſpirits friendly to this iſle,
I liv'd thro' future ages; felt the virtue,
The great, the glorious paſſions that will fire
Diſtant poſterity; when guardian laws
Are by the patriot in the glowing ſenate
Won from corruption; when th' impatient arm
Of liberty, invincible, ſhall ſcourge
The tyrants of mankind—and when the deep,
Through all her ſwelling waves, ſhall proudly joy
Beneath the boundleſs empire of thy ſons.
I ſaw thee, *Alfred*, too—But o'er thy fortunes
Lay clouds impenetrable.

Alf. Ah! good hermit,
That ſcene is dark indeed! Ye awful powers!
To what am I reſerv'd? Still muſt I roam
A wanderer here, inglorious and unknown?
Or am I deſtin'd your great inſtrument,

From

From fierce oppreſſion to redeem this land?
Her. Perhaps, the laſt.—But, prince, remember, then,
The vows, the noble uſes, of affliction.
Preſerve the quick humanity it gives,
The pitying, ſocial ſenſe of human weakneſs:
Yet keep thy ſtubborn fortitude entire,
The manly heart that to another's woe
Is tender, but ſuperior to its own.
Learn to ſubmit; yet learn to conquer fortune.
Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life: to life itſelf,
With all its vain and tranſient joys, ſit looſe.
Chief, let devotion to the ſovereign mind,
A ſteady, chearful, abſolute dependence
On his beſt, wiſeſt government, poſſeſs thee.
In thoughtleſs, gay proſperity, when all
Attends our wiſh, when nought is ſeen around us
But kneeling flattery, and obedient fortune;
Then are blind mortals apt, within themſelves
To fix their ſtay, forgetful of the giver.
But when thus humbled, *Alfred*, as thou art,
When to their feeble natural powers reduc'd,
'Tis then they feel this univerſal truth—
That heaven is all in all—and man is nothing.
Alf. I thank thee, father, for thy pious counſel.
And witneſs, thou dread power! who ſeeſt my heart;
That if not to perform my regal taſk,
To be the common father of my people,
Patron of honour, virtue and religion;
If not to ſhelter induſtry, to guard
Her honeſt portion from oppreſſive pride,
From waſteful riot, and the ſons of rapine,
Who baſely raviſh what they dare not earn;
If not to deal out juſtice like the ſun,

With equal light; if not to ſpread thy bounty,
The treaſures truſted to me, not my own,
On all the ſmiling ranks of nouriſh'd life;
If not to raiſe our drooping *Engliſh* name,
To cloth it yet with terror; make this land
Renown'd for peaceful arts to bleſs mankind,
And generous war to humble proud oppreſſors:
If not to build on an eternal baſe,
On liberty and laws, the public weal:
If not for theſe great ends I am ordain'd,
May I ne'er idly fill the throne of *England!*

Her. Still may thy breaſt theſe ſentiments retain,
In proſperous life.

Alf. Proſperity were ruin,
Could it deſtroy or change ſuch thoughts as theſe.
When Thoſe whom heaven diſtinguiſhes o'er millions,
Profuſely gives them honours, riches, power,
Whate'er th' expanded heart can wiſh; when they,
Accepting the reward, neglect the duty;
Or worſe, pervert thoſe gifts to deeds of ruin:
Is there a wretch they rule ſo mean as they?
Guilty, at once of ſacrilege to heaven,
And of perfidious robbery to men——
But hark! methinks I hear a plaintive voice
Sigh thro' the vale, and wake the mournful echo.

SONG.

1.

Sweet valley, ſay, where penſive lying,
For me, our children, England, *ſighing,*
The beſt of mortals leans his head.
Ye fountains, dimpled by my ſorrow,
Ye brooks that my complainings borrow
O lead me to his lonely bed:

Or

Or if my lover,
Deep woods, you cover.
Ah whiſper where your ſhadows o'er him ſpread!

2.

'Tis not the loſs of pomp and pleaſure,
Of empire, or of tinſel treaſure,
That drops this tear, that ſwells this groan:
No; from a nobler cauſe proceeding,
A heart with love and fondneſs bleeding,
I breathe my ſadly-pleaſing moan,
With other anguiſh,
I ſcorn to languiſh:
For love will feel no ſorrows but his own.

SCENE VI.

ALFRED, HERMIT, ELTRUDA, *advancing.*

Alf. Sure, by the voice, and purport of the ſong,
This generous mourner is my queen *Eltruda.*
And yet how can that be?—O all good powers!
'Tis ſhe! 'tis ſhe!
Elt. My lord, my life, my *Alfred!*
Oh take me to thy arms, with toil o'ercome,
And ſudden tranſport, thus at once to find thee,
In this wild foreſt, pathleſs and perplext!
Alf. Come to my ſoul, thou deareſt, beſt of women?
Come, and repoſe thy ſorrows in my boſom.
O all my paſſions mix in doubtful ſtrife!
If pain or joy prevail, I ſcarce can ſay,
While thus I claſp thee, and recal the perils
To which thy trembling ſteps have been expos'd.
Why haſt thou left the convent where I plac'd thee?
Why, unprotected truſt thee to a land,
A barbarous land where rages *Daniſh* war!

Our hoſpitable *England* is no more!

Elt. Dire was the cauſe, my *Alfred.* The rous'd country,
All wild in breathleſs terror and confuſion,
Inform'd us, a near party of the *Danes*,
Whoſe brutal fury ſpares no ſex, no age,
No place, however privileg'd or holy,
Were on full march that way. Inſtant I fled,
In this diſguiſe, with only theſe attendants:
But in our way oft cheat'd by airy voices,
To bear to this retreat our helpleſs children.

Alf. Ah wanderers too young! ah hapleſs children!
But more unhappy Sire! who cannot give,
To thoſe he loves, protection.

Elt. Thou too, *Alfred*,
Art thou not unattended? None to ſerve thee,
To ſooth thy woes, to watch thy broken ſlumbers!
And when the ſilent tear o'erflows thy eye,
None, with the warm and cordial lip of love,
To kiſs it off! There is in love a power,
There is a ſoft divinity, that draws
Tranſport even from diſtreſs; that gives the heart
A certain pang, excelling far the joys
Of groſs unfeeling life. Beſides, my *Alfred*,
Even had the fury of this barbarous foe
Not forc'd me from the convent, life is ſhort;
And now it trembles on the wing of danger:
Why ſhould we loſe it then? One well-ſav'd hour,
In ſuch a tender circumſtance to lovers,
Is better than an age of common time.

Alf. Oh 'tis too much! thy tenderneſs o'ercomes me!
Nay, look not on me with that ſweet dejection,
Thro' tears that pierce my ſoul!—Chear thee, my love;
Hope ſtill the beſt; that better days await us,

And

And fairer from remembrance.—Thou, *Eltruda*,
Thou art a pledge of happineſs!—On thee
Good angels wait; they led thy journey hither:
And I have heard them, in this wild retreat,
Warbling immortal airs, and ſtrains of comfort.—
But ah the foe is round us: and this iſle
Now holds my ſoul's beſt wealth, the treaſur'd ſtore
Of all my joys—I go to ſkirt it round,
To viſit every creek and ſedgy bank,
Where ruſtles thro' the reeds the ſhadowy gale;
Or where the bending umbrage drinks the ſtream;
Leſt danger unawares ſhould ſteal upon us.
And now, by ſlow degrees, ſolemn and ſad,
Wide falling o'er the world, the nightly ſhades
Huſh the brown woods, and deepen all their horrors:
While humbled into reſt, and aw'd by darkneſs,
Each creature ſeeks the covert. To that cell
Retire, my life. I will not long be abſent.

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

ALFRED *alone.*

'TIS now the depth of darkneſs and repoſe.
All nature ſeems to reſt: while *Alfred* wakes
To think, and to be wretched.—Where yon oak
With wide and duſky ſhade o'erhangs the ſtream,
That glides in ſilence by, I took my ſtand:
What time the glow-worm thro' the dewy path
Firſt ſhot his twinkling flame. I ſtood attentive,
Liſtening each noiſe from wood-clad hill and dale;
But all was huſh'd around. Nor trumpet's clang,

Nor

Nor ſhout of roving foe, nor haſty tread
Of evening paſſenger, diſturb'd the wide
And awful ſtillneſs. Homeward as I ſped,
O'er many a delve, thro' many a path perplext,
Maze running into maze; ill-boding thoughts
Haunted my ſteps.—Perhaps my gallant friend,
Diſcover'd to the *Danes*, this moment bleeds
Beneath their ſwords! or lyes a breathleſs corſe,
The prey of midnight wolves.—Some mournful ſound
Strikes ſudden on my ſenſe.

SCENE II.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA.

Elt. Here will I lean
On this green bank, to wait the wiſh'd return
Of morning and my lord.
Alf. My gentle love,
Eltruda, why to this untimely ſky
Expoſe thy health! The dews of night fall faſt:
The chill breeze ſighs aloud.
Elt. I could not reſt.
Can love repoſe when apprehenſion wakes,
And whiſpers to the heart all dreadful things,
That walk with night and ſolitude? Methought,
In each low murmur of the woods, I heard
Th' invading foe—or heard my *Alfred* groan!
Our tender infants too—their fancy'd cries
Still ſound within my ears!
Alf. Eltruda, there
I am a woman too: I who ſhould cheer,
And ſhelter thee from every care. My children!
The thought of what may chance to them, compleats
Their father's ſum of woes. O what ſafe ſhade

Can

Can ſkreen their opening bloſſom from the ſtorm
That beats ſevere on us! Not ſweeter buds
The primroſe in the vale, nor ſooner ſhrinks,
At winter's churliſh blaſt—
Elt. Behold, my lord—
Good angels ſhield us!—What a flood of brightneſs
Waves round our heads!
Alf. The hermit moves this way.
That wondrous man holds converſe with the hoſt
Of higher natures. Theſe far-beaming fires
Were doubtleſs kindled up at his command.
Be ſilent and attentive.

SCENE III.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA, HERMIT.

Her. I have heard
Thy fond complainings, *Alfred.*
Alf. You have, then,
Good father, heard the cauſe that wrings them from me.
Her. The human race are ſons of ſorrow born:
And each muſt have his portion. Vulgar minds
Refuſe, or crouch beneath their load: the brave
Bear theirs without repining.
Alf Who can bear
The ſhaft, that wounds him thro' an infant ſide?
When whom we love, to whom we owe protection,
Implore the hand we cannot reach to ſave them?
Her. Weep not, *Eltruda.*—Yet thou art a king,
All private paſſions fall before that name.
Thy ſubjects claim thee whole.
Alf. Can public truſt,
O reverend ſage! deſtroy the ſofter ties
That twine around the parent's yearning heart?

That

That holy paſſion heaven itſelf infus'd,
And blended with the ſtream that feeds our life.
Her. You love your children, prince—
Alf. Lives there on earth,
In air, or ocean, creature tame or wild,
That has not known this univerſal love?
All nature feels it intimate and deep,
And all her ſons of inſtinct or of reaſon.
Her. Then ſhew that paſſion in its nobleſt form.
Seaſon their tender years with every virtue,
Social or ſelf-retir'd; of public greatneſs,
Or lovely in the hour of private life;
With all that can exalt, or can adorn
Their princely rank.
Alf. Alas, their hope muſt ſtoop,
Such my unhappy fate, to humbler aims:
Affliction and baſe want muſt be their teachers.
Her. Affliction is the wholeſome ſoil of virtue:
Where patience, honour, ſweet humanity,
Calm fortitude take root, and ſtrongly flouriſh.
But proſperous fortune, that allures with pleaſure,
Dazzles with pomp, and undermines with flattery,
Poiſons the ſoul, and its beſt product kills.
Should'ſt thou regain thy throne—
Alf. My throne? What glimpſe,
What ſmalleſt ray of hope—
Her. That day may come.—
What do I feel? My labouring breaſt expands
To give the glorious inſpiration room.
And now the cloud that o'er thy future fate,
Like total night, lay heavy and obſcure,
Fades into air: and all the brightening ſcene
Dawns gay before me! A long line of kings,
From thee deſcending, glorious and renown'd,

In

In ſhadowy pomp I ſee!
Genius of *England!* hovering near,
In all thy radiant charms appear:
O come and ſummon, from the world unknown,
Thoſe mighty chiefs, thoſe ſons of future fame,
Who, ages hence, this iſland ſhall adorn,
And ſpread to diſtant realms her glorious name.
Slow let the viſionary forms ariſe,
And ſolemn paſs before our wond'ring eyes.

[*Muſic grand and awful. The Genius deſcending, ſings the following*

SONG.

From thoſe eternal regions bright,
Where ſuns, that never ſet in night,
Diffuſe the golden day:
Where ſpring, unfading, pours around,
O'er all the dew-impearled ground,
Her thouſand colours gay:
O whether on the fountain's flowery ſide,
Whence living waters glide,
Or in the fragrant grove,
Whoſe ſhade emboſoms peace and love,
New pleaſures all your hours employ,
And raviſh every ſenſe with every joy:
Great heirs of empire! yet unborn,
Who ſhall this iſland late adorn;
A monarch's drooping thought to chear,
Appear! appear! appear!

Spirits of EDWARD III. PHILIPPA *his queen, and the* Black Prince *his ſon, ariſe.*

Her. Alfred, look; and ſay,

What

What ſeeſt thou yonder?

Alf. Three majeſtic ſhapes:
Two habited like mighty warriors old;
A third in whoſe bright aſpect beauty ſmiles
More ſoft and feminine. A lucid veil,
From her fair neck dependent floats around,
Light-hovering in the gale.

Her. O *Alfred*, man
Belov'd of heaven, behold a king *indeed:*
Matchleſs in arms; in arts of peaceful rule,
A ſovereign's trueſt glory, yet more fam'd:
England's third *Edward!*—At his fear'd approach,
Proud *France*, even now, thro' all her dukedoms quakes.
Her Genius ſighs; and from th' eternal ſhore,
The ſoul of her great *Charles*, a recent gueſt,
Looks back to earth, and mourns the diſtant woes,
His realms are doom'd to feel from *Edward*'s wrath.
Beneath his ſtandard, *Britain* ſhall go forth,
Array'd for conqueſt, terrible in glory:
And nations ſhrink before her. O what deaths,
What deſolation ſhall her vengeance ſpread,
From engines yet unfound; whoſe lightnings flaſh,
Whoſe thunders roar, amazing o'er the plain:
As if this king had ſummon'd from on high
Heaven's dread artillery to fight his battles!
Nor is renown in war his ſole ambition:
A nobler paſſion labours in his breaſt——
Alfred, attend—to make his people bleſt!
The ſacred rights that reaſon loudly claims
For free-born men—theſe, *Alfred*, are his care:
Oft to confirm, and fix them on the baſe
Of equal laws—O father of mankind!
Succeſſive praiſes from a grateful land

Shall

Shall ſaint thy name for ever!

Alf. Holy ſage,
Whom angels thus enlighten and inſpire,
My boſom kindles at thy heaven-born flame.
Great *Edward!* be thy conqueſts and their praiſe
Unrival'd to thyſelf. But O thy fame
For care paternal of the public weal,
For *England* bleſt at home—my rapt heart pants
To equal that renown!

Her. Know farther, *Alfred*;
A ſovereign's great example forms a people.
The public breaſt is noble, or is vile,
As he inſpires it. In this *Edward*'s time,
Warm'd by his courage, by his honour rais'd,
High flames the *Britiſh* ſpirit like the ſun,
To ſhine o'er half the globe: and where it ſhines,
The cheriſh'd world to brighten and enrich.
Laſt ſee this monarch in his hour of leiſure:
Even ſocial on a throne, and taſting joys
To ſolitary greatneſs ſeldom known,
As friend, as huſband, and as father bleſt.
That god-like *Youth* remark, his eldeſt hope,
Who gives new luſtre to the name he bears;
An hero ere a man.—I ſee him now
On *Creſſy*'s glorious plain! The father's heart,
With anxious love and wonder at his daring,
Beats high in mingled tranſport. Great himſelf,
Great above *jealouſy*, the guilty mark
That brands all meaner minds, ſee, he applauds
The *filial excellence*, and gives him ſcope
To blaze in his full brightneſs!—Lo, again
He ſends him dreadful to a nobler field:
The danger and the glory all his own!
A *captive king*, the rival of his arms,

I ſee

I ſee adorn his triumph! Heaven! what grace
What ſplendor from his gracious temper mild
That triumph draws! As gentle mercy kind,
He chears the hoſtile prince whoſe fall he weeps!
Alf. A ſon ſo rich in virtues, and ſo grac'd
With all that gives thoſe virtues fair to ſhine,
When I would aſk of heaven ſome mighty boon,
Should claim the foremoſt place.
Her. Remember, then,
What to thy infant ſons from thee is due,
As parent and as prince.
Elt. Forgive me, Hermit.
Forgive a queen and wife her anxious fondneſs.
Yon beauteous ſhade, that, as I gaze her o'er,
My wonder draws, eſcapes your graver thought.
Her. O bright *Eltruda!* thou whoſe blooming youth,
Whoſe amiable ſweetneſs promiſe bleſſings
To *Alfred* and to *England!* ſee, and mark,
In yonder pleaſing form, the beſt of wives,
The happieſt too, repaid with all the faith,
With all the friendſhip, love and duty claim.
She, powerful o'er the heart her charms enſlave—
O virtue rarely practis'd!—uſes nobly
That happy influence; to prompt each purpoſe
Fair honour kindles in her *Edward*'s breaſt.
Amid the pomps, the pleaſures of a court,
Humble of heart, ſeverely good; the friend
Of modeſt worth, the parent of the poor.
Eltruda! O tranſmit theſe nobleſt charms
To that fair *daughter*, that unfolding roſe,
With which, * *as on this day*, heaven crown'd your loves.

* This maſque was written to be acted at *Cliffden*, on the birth-day of her Royal Highneſs the princeſs *Auguſta*

The

The ſpirit of ELIZABETH *ariſes.*

Alf. Say, who is ſhe, in whom the noble graces,
Th' engaging manner, dignity and eaſe,
Are join'd with manly ſenſe and reſolution?
Her. The great *Eliza*. She, amid a world
That threat'ning ſwells in high commotion round her;
Each dangerous ſtate her unrelenting foe,
And chief a proud enormous empire ſtretch'd
O'er half mankind; with not one friendly power,
But what her kind creating hand ſhall riſe
From out the marſhes of the branching *Rhine*;
And mined, at home, her ever-tottering throne
By reſtleſs bigots, who, beneath the maſk
Of mild religion, are to every crime
Set looſe, the faithleſs ſons of barbarous zeal:
Yet ſhe ſhall crown this happy iſle with peace,
With arts, with riches, grandeur and renown:
And quell, by turns, the madneſs of her foes.
As when the winds, from different quarters, urge
The tempeſt on our ſhore: ſecure the cliffs
Repel its idle rage, and pour it back,
In broken billows, foaming to the main.
Alf. How ſhall ſhe, Hermit, gain theſe glorious ends?
Her. By ſilent wiſdom, whoſe informing power
Works unperceiv'd; that ſeems in council ſlow;
But, when reſolv'd, and ripe for execution,
That parts like lightning from the ſecret gloom:
By ever ſeizing the right *point of view*,
Her trueſt intereſt; which ſhe firm purſues,
With ſteady patience, thro' the maze of ſtate,

The

The ſtorm of oppoſition, the mixt views,
And thwarting manag'd paſſions of mankind:
By healing the diviſions of her people,
And ſowing that fell peſt among her foes:
By ſaving, from the vermin of a court,
Her treaſure; which, when fair occaſion calls,
She knows to laviſh, in protecting arts,
In guarding nations, and in nurſing ſtates:
By calling up to power, and public life,
Each virtue, each ability: yet *ſhe*,
Amid the various worthies glowing round her,
Still ſhines the firſt; the central ſun that wakes,
That rules their every motion: not the ſlave,
And paſſive property of her own creatures.
But the great ſoul that animates her reign,
That lights it to perfection, is the love,
The confidence unbounded, which her wiſdom,
Her probity and juſtice, ſhall inſpire
Into the public breaſt. Hence cordial faith,
Which nought can ſhake; hence unexhauſted treaſure:
And hence, above all mercenary force,
The hand that by the free-born heart is rais'd,
And guards the blended weal of Prince and People.
She too ſhall raiſe *Britannia*'s naval power;
Shall greatly raviſh, from inſulting *Spain*,
The world commanding ſceptre of the deep.

Elt. O matchleſs queen! O glory of her ſex!
The great idea, father, fills my ſoul,
And bids it glow beyond a woman's paſſions.

Spirit of WILLIAM III. *ariſes.*

Her. Once more, O *Alfred*, raiſe thine eyes, and mark,

Who

Who next adorns the ſcene, yon laurel'd *ſhade.*
Ere yet the age that cloſ'd this female reign
Hath led around its train of circling years,
Shall *Britain* on the verge of ruin ſtand.
A monarch, loſt to greatneſs, to renown,
The ſlave of dreaming monks, ſhall fill her throne.
Weak and aſpiring; fond of lawleſs rule,
The lawleſs rule his mean ambition covets
Unequal to acquire. Yon prince thou ſaw'ſt,
To glory tutor'd by the hand ſevere
Of ſharp adverſity, ſhall heaven upraiſe,
And injur'd nations with joint call invoke,
Their laſt, their only refuge. Lo! he comes:
Wide o'er the billows of the boundleſs deep
His navy rides triumphant: and the ſhores
Of ſhouting *Albion* echo with his name.
Immortal *William!* from before his face,
Flies Superſtition, flies oppreſſive Power,
With vile Servility that crouch'd and kiſs'd,
The whip he trembled at. From this great hour
Shall *Britain* date her rights and laws reſtor'd:
And one high purpoſe rule her ſovereign's heart;
To ſcourge the pride of *France*, that foe profeſs'd
To *England* and to Freedom. Yet I ſee,
From diſtant climes in peaceful triumph born,
Another KING ariſe! His early youth
With verdant laurel crown'd, for deeds of arms
That Reaſon's voice approves; for courage, rais'd
Beyond all aid from paſſion, greatly calm!
Intrepidly ſerene!—In days of peace,
Around his throne the human virtues wait,
And fair adorn him with their mildeſt beams;
Good without ſhow, above ambition great;
Wiſe, equal, merciful, the friend of man!
O *Alfred!*

O *Alfred!* ſhould thy fate, long ages hence,
In meaning ſcenes recall'd, exalt the joy
Of ſome glad feſtal day, before a *prince*
Sprung from that king belov'd—Hear, gracious heaven!
Thy ſoft humanity, thy patriot heart,
Thy manly virtue, ſteady, great, reſolv'd,
Be his ſupreme ambition! and with theſe,
The happineſs, the glory, that await
Thy better days, be ſhower'd upon his head!

Alf. O Hermit! thou haſt rais'd me to new life!
New hopes, new triumphs ſwell my bounding heart—

Her. It comes! it comes!—The promis'd ſcene diſcloſes!
Already the great work of fate begins!
The mighty wheels are turning, whence will ſpread,
Beyond the limits of our narrow world,
The fair dominions, *Alfred*, of thy ſons.
Behold the warrior bright with *Daniſh* ſpoils!—
The *raven* droops his wings—and hark! the trumpet,
Exulting, ſpeaks the reſt.

SCENE IV.

Symphony of martial muſic.

ALFRED, ELTRUDA, HERMIT, *Earl of* DEVON, *followed by ſoldiers.*

Alf. My friend return'd!
O welcome, welcome! But what happy tidings
Smile in thy chearful countenance?——

Dev. My Liege,
Your troops have been ſucceſsful.—But to heaven
Aſcend the praiſe! For ſure th' event exceeds
The hand of man.

Alf. How

Alf. How was it noble *Devon?*
Dev. You know my caſtle is not hence far diſtant,
Thither I ſped: and in a *Daniſh* habit
The trenches paſſing, by a ſecret way,
Known to myſelf alone, emerg'd at once
Amid my joyful ſoldiers. There I found
A generous few, the veteran, hardy gleanings
Of many a hapleſs fight. They with a fierce
Heroic fire inſpirited each other;
Reſolv'd on death, diſdaining to ſurvive
Their deareſt country.—" If we fall, I cry'd,
" Let us not tamely fall like paſſive cowards!
" No; let us live—or let us die, like men!
" Come on, my friends: to *Alfred* we will cut
" Our glorious way; or, as we nobly periſh,
" Will offer to the genius of our country
" Whole hecatombs of *Danes.*"—As if one ſoul
Had mov'd them all, around their heads they flaſh'd
Their flaming faulchions—" Lead us to theſe *Danes!*—
" Our country!—vengeance!" was the general cry.
Strait on the careleſs drouſy camp we ruſh'd:
And rapid, as the flame devours the ſtubble,
Bore down the heartleſs *Danes.* With this ſucceſs
Our enterprize increas'd. Not now contented
To hew a paſſage thro' the flying herd;
We, unremitting, urg'd a total rout.
The valiant *Hubba* bites the bloody field,
With twice ſix hundred *Danes* around him ſtrow'd.
Alf. My glorious friend this action has reſtor'd
Our ſinking country.—What reward can equal
A deed ſo great?—Is not yon pictur'd *Raven*
Their famous magic ſtandard—Emblem fit
To ſpeak the ſavage genius of the people—
That oft has ſcatter'd on our troops diſmay,

And

And feeble conſternation?

Dev. 'Tis the ſame.
Wrought by the ſiſters of the *Daniſh* king,
Of furious *Ivar*, in a midnight hour:
While the ſick moon, at their enchanted ſong,
Wrapt in pale tempeſt, labour'd thro' the clouds,
The *Demons* of deſtruction then, they ſay,
Were all abroad, and mixing with the woof
Their baleful power: the ſiſters ever ſung;
"Shake, ſtandard, ſhake, this ruin on our foes!"

Her. So theſe infernal powers, with rays of truth
Still deck their fables, to delude who truſt them.

Alf. But where, my noble couſin, are the reſt
Of your brave troops?

Dev. On t'other ſide the ſtream,
That half incloſes this retreat, I left them.
Rous'd from the fear, with which it was congeal'd,
As in a froſt, the country pours amain.
The ſpirit of our anceſtors is up,
The ſpirit of the Free! and with a voice
That breathes ſucceſs, they all demand their king.

Alf. Quick, let us join them, and improve their ardor.
We cannot be too haſty to ſecure
The glances of occaſion.

SCENE *the laſt.*

To them CORIN, EMMA, *kneeling to* ALFRED.

Cor. Good my Liege,
Pardon the poor unequal entertainment,
Which we, unknowing———

Alf. Riſe, my honeſt ſhepherd.
I came to thee a peaſant, not a prince:
Thy rural entertainment was ſincere,

Plain,

Plain, hoſpitable, kind: ſuch as, I hope,
Will ever mark the manners of this nation.
You friendly lodg'd me, when by all deſerted:
And ſhall have ample recompence.
Cor. One boon
Is all I crave.
Alf. Good ſhepherd, ſpeak thy wiſh.
Cor. Permiſſion in your wars, to ſerve your grace:
For tho' here loſt in ſolitary ſhades,
A ſimple ſwain, I bear an *Engliſh* heart;
A heart that burns with rage to ſee thoſe *Danes*,
Thoſe foreign ruffians, thoſe inhuman pirates,
Oft our inferiors prov'd, thus lord it o'er us.
Alf. Brave countryman, come on. 'Tis ſuch as thou,
Who from affection ſerve, and free-born zeal,
To guard whate'er is dear and ſacred to them,
That are a king's beſt honour and defence.

EMMA *ſings the following* SONG.

1.

If thoſe, who live in ſhepherd's bower,
Preſs not the rich and ſtately bed;
The new-mown hay and breathing flower
A ſofter couch beneath them ſpread.

2.

If thoſe, who ſit at ſhepherd's board,
Sooth not their taſte by wanton art;
They take what nature's gifts afford,
And take it with a chearful heart.

3.

If thoſe, who drain the ſhepherd's bowl,
No high and ſparkling wines can boaſt;
With wholſome cups they chear the ſoul,
And crown them with the village toaſt.

4.

If thoſe, who join in ſhepherd's ſport,
Gay dancing on the dazy'd ground,
Have not the ſplendor of a court;
Yet love adorns the merry round.

Alf. My lov'd *Eltruda!* thou ſhalt here remain,
With gentle *Emma*, and this reverend hermit.
Ye ſilver ſtreams, that murmuring wind around
This duſky ſpot, to you I truſt my all!
O cloſe around her, woods! for her, ye vales,
Throw forth your flowers, your ſofteſt lap diffuſe!
And *Thou!* whoſe ſecret and expanſive hand.
Moves all the ſprings of this vaſt univerſe:
Whoſe government aſtoniſhes; who here,
In a few hours, beyond our utmoſt hope,
Beyond our thought, yet doubting, haſt clear'd up
The ſtorm of fate! preſerve what thy kind will,
Thy bountiful appointment, makes ſo dear
To human hearts! preſerve my queen and children!
Preſerve the hopes of *England!* while I go
To finiſh thy great work, and ſave my country.

Elt. Go, pay the debt of honour to the public.
If ever woman, *Alfred*, lov'd her huſband
More fondly than herſelf, I claim that virtue,
That heart-felt happineſs. Yet, by our loves
I ſwear, that in a glorious death with thee
I rather would be wrapt, than live-long years
To charm thee from the rugged paths of honour:
So much I think thee born for beauteous deeds,
And the bright courſe of glory.

Alf. Matchleſs woman!
Love, at thy voice, is kindled to ambition.
Be this my deareſt triumph, to approve me
A huſband worthy of the beſt *Eltruda!*

Her. Behold

Her. Behold, my lord, our venerable bard,
Aged and blind, him whom the Muſes favour.
Yet ere you go, in our lov'd country's praiſe,
That nobleſt theme, hear what his rapture breathes.

An ODE.

1.

When Britain *firſt, at heaven's command,*
Aroſe from out the azure main;
This *was the charter of the land,*
And guardian angels ſung this *ſtrain:*
" *Rule,* Britannia, *rule the waves;*
" Britons *never will be ſlaves.*"

2.

The nations, not ſo bleſt as thee,
Muſt, in their turns, to tyrants fall:
While thou ſhalt flouriſh, great and free,
The dread and envy of them all.
" *Rule,* &c.

3.

Still more majeſtic ſhalt thou riſe,
More dreadful, from each foreign ſtroke:
As the loud blaſt that tears the ſkies,
Serves but to root thy native oak.
Rule, &c.

4.

Thee haughty tyrants ne'er ſhall tame:
All their attempts to bend thee down,
Will but arouſe thy generous flame;
But work their woe, and thy renown.
" *Rule,* &c.

5.

To thee belongs the rural reign;
Thy cities ſhall with commerce ſhine:
All thine ſhall be the ſubject main,
And every ſhore it circles thine.
" *Rule,* &c.

6.

The muſes, ſtill with freedom found,
Shall to thy happy coaſt repair:
Bleſt iſle! with matchleſs beauty crown'd,
And manly hearts to guard the fair.
" *Rule*, Britannia, *rule the waves:*
" Britons *never will be ſlaves.*"

Her. Alfred, go forth! lead on the radiant years,
To thee reveal'd in viſion.—Lo! they riſe!
Lo! patriots, heroes, ſages, croud to birth:
And bards to ſing them in immortal verſe!
I ſee thy commerce, *Britain*, graſp the world:
All nations ſerve thee; every foreign flood,
Subjected, pays its tribute to the *Thames*.
Thither the golden South obedient pours
His ſunny treaſures: thither the ſoft Eaſt
Her ſpices, delicacies, gentle gifts:
And thither his rough trade the ſtormy North.
See, where beyond the vaſt *Atlantic* ſurge,
By boldeſt keels untouch'd, a dreadful ſpace!
Shores, yet unfound, ariſe! in youthful prime,
With towering foreſts, mighty rivers crown'd!
Theſe ſtoop to *Britain*'s thunder. This new world,
Shook to its centre, trembles at her name:
And there her ſons, with aim exalted, ſow
The ſeeds of riſing empire, arts, and arms.
Britons, proceed, the ſubject deep command,
Awe with your natives every hoſtile land.
Vain are their threats, rheir armies all are vain:
They rule the balanc'd world, who rule the main.

EDWARD and ELEONORA.

A

TRAGEDY.

TO HER

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCESS of WALES.

MADAM,

IF I take the liberty, once more, to crave the protection of your ROYAL HIGHNESS, for another Tragedy of my writing, it is becauſe I am led, almoſt unavoidably, to it, by my ſubject. In the character of ELEONORA I have endeavoured to repreſent, however faintly, a PRINCESS diſtinguiſhed for all the virtues that render greatneſs amiable. I have aimed, particularly,

to do juſtice to her inviolable affection and and generous tenderneſs for a PRINCE, who was the darling of a great and free people.

Their deſcendents, even now, will own, with pleaſure, how properly, this addreſs is made to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. I am, with the profoundeſt reſpect,

MADAM,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS's

Moſt humble and

Moſt devoted ſervant,

JAMES THOMSON.

PROLOGUE.

By a FRIEND.

IN former times, when fierce religious rage,
And prieſtly ſway deform'd each ſuffering age,
All manly wit, all uſeful learning lay
In darkneſs loſt, nor hoped returning day.
Religion then was ſtain'd by cruel deeds:
And free-born Reaſon ſtoop'd to craft and creeds.
But happier we!—And tho' to-night we ſhow
What fatal ills from blind devotion flow,
'Tis not that we ſuch rage renew'd can fear,
Or dread the hand of perſecution here—
Our ſcene would wide humanity impart;
Would breathe extenſive candor thro' the heart;
Show true religion even to error kind,
And claim the perfect freedom of the mind.
If, too, the poet paints a noble ſtrife
'Twixt the fond huſband and the generous wife;
If all the father in his *voice complains,*
And all the mother in her *tender ſtrains;*
If theſe beſt paſſions prompt the pleaſing woe,
Indulge it freely——Nature bids it flow:
Where parent Nature leads, you cannot ſtray;
And what ſhe wills, 'tis virtue to obey.
Fond of BRITANNIA's *fame, and juſt to* YOU,
He bids old Engliſh honour *live anew,*
And calls your great firſt EDWARD *up to view.*
But if his line too weak, his ſtroke too faint,
The graceful figure, in full light, to paint;
In candid part his honeſt meaning take,
And ſpare the poet for the hero's ſake.

The PERSONS.

EDWARD, Prince of *England.*	Mr. Delane.
Earl of GLOSTER.	Mr. Roſco.
THEALD, Archdeacon of *Liege.*	Mr. Roberts.
SELIM, Sultan of *Jaffa.*	Mr. Ryan.
ELEONORA, Princeſs of *England.*	Mrs. Horton.
DARAXA, an *Arabian* Princeſs.	Mrs. Hallam.

Aſſaſſin, Officers, &c.

SCENE, EDWARD's *tent in the camp before* Jaffa, *a city on the coaſt of* Paleſtine.

EDWARD and ELEONORA.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Prince EDWARD, THEALD *Archdeacon of* Liege, *Earl of* GLOSTER.

Edw. I WILL no longer doubt. 'Tis plain, my friends,
That with our little band of *Engliſh* troops,
By all allies, all weſtern powers deſerted,
All but the noble knights that guard this land,
The flower of *Europe*, and of Chriſtian valor,
Nought can be done, nought worthy of our cauſe,
Worthy of *England*'s heir, and of the name
Of *Lion-hearted* RICHARD; whoſe renown,
After almoſt a century elaps'd,
Shakes through its wide extent this eaſtern world.
What elſe could bend the *Saracen* to peace,
Who might, with better policy, refuſe
To grant it us? yes, to the prince of *Jaffa*
I will accord the peace he has demanded:
And tho' my troops, impatient, wait the ſignal
To ſtorm yon walls, yet will I not expoſe,
In vain attempts, valor that ſhould be ſav'd
For better days, and for the public welfare.
Raſh fruitleſs war, from wanton glory wag'd,

Is

Is only ſplendid murder—What ſays *Theald?*
Approves my reverend father of my purpoſe?

Thea. Edward, illuſtrious heir of *England*'s crown,
I muſt indeed be blinded with the zeal
Of this our holy cauſe, to think your arms,
Thus all-forſaken, thus betray'd, ſufficient
To reach the grandeur of your firſt deſign,
And, from the yoke of Infidels, to free
The ſacred city, object of our vows;
Yet this, methinks, this *Jaffa* might be ſeiz'd:
That ſtill were ſomething, an auſpicious omen
Of future conqueſt—But, unſkill'd in war,
To you, my lord, and *Gloſter*'s wiſe experience
I this ſubmit.

Edw. Speak, *Gloſter*, your advice,
Before I fix my lateſt reſolution.

Gloſt. You know, my lord, I never was a friend
To this cruſado. My unchang'd advice
Is ſtrenuous ſtill for peace. Nor this, I urge,
From our deſerted arms, and cauſe betray'd,
But from the ſtate of our unhappy country.
Behold her, *Edward*, with a filial eye,
And ſay, is this a time for theſe adventures?
Behold her then with deep commotion ſhook,
Beneath a falſe deluſive face of quiet:
Behold her bleeding yet from civil war,
Exhauſted, ſunk; drain'd by ten thouſand arts
Of lawleſs impoſition, prieſtly fraud,
Italian leeches, and inſatiate *Rome*;
That never raged before with ſuch groſs inſult,
With ſuch abandon'd avarice. Beſides,
Who knows what evil counſellors, again,
Are gather'd round the throne! In times like theſe,
Diſturb'd, and lowring with unſettled freedom,

One

One ſtep to lawleſs power, one bold attempt
Renew'd, the leaſt infringement of our charters,
Would in the giddy nation raiſe a tempeſt,
Return, my prince. You have already ſav'd!
Your father from his foes, from haughty *Leiſter*:
Now ſave him from his miniſters, from thoſe
Who hold him captive in the worſt of chains——
Edw. You, *Gloſter*, ſav'd us both.
Gloſt. I did my duty;
Even while I join'd with *Leiſter*, did my duty—
I hope I did—He, who contends for freedom,
Can ne'er be juſtly deem'd his ſovereign's foe:
No, 'tis the wretch that tempts him to ſubvert it,
The ſoothing ſlave, the traitor in the boſom,
Who beſt deſerves that name; he is a worm
That eats out all the happineſs of kingdoms.
Edward, return; loſe not a day, an hour,
Before this city. Tho' your cauſe be holy,
Believe me, 'tis a much more pious office,
To ſave your father's old and broken years,
His mild and eaſy temper, from the ſnares
Of low corrupt inſinuating traitors:
A nobler office far! on the firm baſe
Of well-proportion'd liberty, to build
The common quiet, happineſs and glory,
Of king and people, *England*'s riſing grandeur.
To you, my prince, this taſk, of right, belongs.
Has not the royal heir a juſter claim
To ſhare his father's inmoſt heart and counſels,
Than aliens to his int'reſt, thoſe who make
A property, a market of his honour?
One reaſon more allow me to ſuggeſt
For peace, immediate peace—ſhould blind misfortune,
In this far diſtant hoſtile land, oppreſs us;

A chance

A chance to which our weakneſs ſtands expos'd:
What, *Edward*, of thy princeſs would become,
Thy *Eleonora*; ſhe, whoſe tender love
Thro' ſtormy ſeas, and in fierce camps attends thee?
What of thy blooming offspring? charg'd with theſe,
To give our courage ſcope were cruel raſhneſs.

Edw. Enough, my lord: I ſtand reſolv'd on peace;
And will to *England* ſtrait—But where, alas,
Where ſhall we cover our inglorious heads;
When gay with hope the people round us preſs,
To hear by what exploits we have ſuſtain'd
The fame of *Richard*, and of *Engliſh* valor?
Shall I, my generous country, I be rank'd
With thoſe weak princes, who conſume thy wealth,
And ſink thy name in idle expeditions?
Perfidious *France!* Be this the ruling point
Of my whole life, and paſſion of my ſoul,
To humble thee proud nation!—Meantime, *Gloſter*,
See that the captive princeſs be reſtor'd,
Daraxa, to the Sultan of this city,
Whoſe bride ſhe is—We wage not war with women.

SCENE II.

EDWARD, THEALD, GLOSTER, *An Officer belonging to the Prince.*

Off. One from the prince of *Jaffa*, Sir, demands
Your ſecret ear on ſome important meſſage.

Edw. Conduct him to my tent— [*Officer goes out.*
He brings, I judge,
The Sultan's laſt inſtructions for this peace.
Here wait: I may your faithful counſel want.

SCENE

SCENE III.

THEALD, GLOSTER.

Thea. Whatever woes, of late, have clouded *England*;
Yet muſt I, *Gloſter*, call that nation happy,
On whoſe horizon ſmiles a dawning prince
Of *Edward*'s worth and virtues.

Gloſt. True, my friend;
Edward has great, has amiable virtues,
That virtue chiefly which befits a prince:
He loves the people he muſt one day rule;
With fondneſs loves them, with a noble pride;
Eſteems their good, eſteems their glory his.
One inſtance it becomes me to recount,
That ſhows the genuine greatneſs of his ſoul.
Tho' I have met him in the bloody field,
He fighting for his father, I for freedom;
Yet bears his boſom no remaining grudge
Of thoſe diſtracted times: to me his heart
Is greatly reconcil'd—Virtue! beyond
The little unforgiving ſoul of tyrants!
Now will I tell thee, *Theald*, whence I ſtoop
To wear the gaudy chains of court-attendance,
At theſe grey years; that ſhould in calm retirement
Paſs the ſoft evening of a buſtling life,
And plume my parting ſoul for better worlds.
Amidſt his many virtues, youthful *Edward*
Is lofty, warm, and abſolute of temper!
I therefore ſeek to moderate his heat,
To guide his fiery virtues, that, miſled
By dazzling power, and flattering ſycophants,
Might finiſh what his father's weaker meaſures
Have try'd in vain. And hence I here attend him,

In

In expeditions which I ne'er approv'd,
In holy wars---your pardon, reverend father———
I muſt declare I think ſuch wars the fruit
Of idle courage or miſtaken zeal,
Sometimes of rapine and religious rage,
To every miſchief prompt.
Thea. You wrong my lord,
You wrong them much. To ſet this matter only
Upon a civil footing: ſay, what right
Had robbers ruſhing from *Arabian* deſarts,
Fierce as the ſuns that kindled up their rage,
Thus, in a barbarous torrent to bear down
All *Aſia*, *Afric*, and profane their altars?
And to repel brute force by force is juſt.
Nay, does not even our duty, int'reſt, glory,
The common honour of the Chriſtian name,
Require us to repreſs their wild ambition,
That labours weſtward ſtill, and threatens *Europe?*
Gloſt. Yes, when they burſt their limits, let us check them:
And with a firmer hand than thoſe looſe Chriſtians,
The moſt corrupt and abject of mankind,
Slaves, doubly ſlaves, who ſuffer'd theſe *Arabians*,
In virtue their ſuperiors as in valor,
Without reſiſtance to o'er-run the world.
By rage and zeal, 'tis true, their empire roſe:
But now ſome ſettled ages of poſſeſſion
Create a right, than which, I fear, few nations
Can ſhew a better. Sure I am 'tis madneſs,
Inhuman madneſs, thus, from half the world,
To drain its blood and treaſure, to neglect
Each art of peace, each care of government;
And all for what? By ſpreading deſolation,
Rapine and ſlaughter o'er the other half,

To

To gain a conqueſt we can never hold.
I venerate this land. Thoſe ſacred hills,
Thoſe vales, thoſe cities, trod by ſaints and prophets,
By GOD himſelf, the ſcenes of heavenly wonders,
Inſpire me with a certain awful joy.
But the ſame GOD, my friend, pervades, ſuſtains,
Surrounds and fills this univerſal frame;
And every land where ſpreads his vital preſence,
His all-enlivening breath, to me is holy.
Excuſe me, *Theald*, if I go too far:
I meant alone to ſay, I think theſe wars
A kind of perſecution. And when that,
That moſt abſurd and cruel of all vices,
Is once begun, where ſhall it find an end;
Each in his turn, or has or claims a right
To wield its dagger, to return its furies;
And, firſt or laſt, they fall upon ourſelves.

Edw. [*behind the ſcenes.*] Inhuman villain! is thy meſſage murder?

Thea. Ha! heard you not the prince exclaiming murder?

Gloſt. Should this Barbarian meſſenger.——— [*Moving towards the noiſe.*]
'Tis ſo!

SCENE IV.

THEALD, GLOSTER; *to them prince* EDWARD *wounded in the arm, and dragging in the aſſaſſin.*

Edw. Deteſted wretch! And does the prince of *Jaffa*
Send baſe aſſaſſins to tranſact his treaties?
There---take thy anſwer, ruffian!
[*Stabs him with the dagger he had wreſted from him.*]
Blow too haſty!
I ſhould

I ſhould have ſav'd thee for a fitter death.
Aſſ. I would have triumph'd, Chriſtian, in thy rage.
For know, thou vile deſtroyer of the faithful!
That tho' my erring dagger miſs'd thy heart,
Yet has it fir'd thy veins with mortal poiſon,
Whoſe very touch is death—ALLAH be prais'd!
O glorious fate! prophet, receive my ſoul! [*Dies.*]
Edw. [*after a ſhort pauſe.*] Why gaze you with amazement on each other?
Are we not men, to whom the various chances
Of life are known?
Gloſt. Ha! poiſon! did he ſay?
Then is at once my prince and country loſt!
O fatal wound to *England!*
Thea. Quick, my lord,
Retire and have it dreſs'd, without delay;
Ere the fell poiſon can diffuſe its rage,
And deeply taint your blood.
Edw. The princeſs comes!
O ſave me from her tenderneſs!

SCENE V.

EDWARD, THEALD, GLOSTER; *to them the princeſs* ELEONORA.

Eleon. My *Edward!*
Support me!—Oh!
Edw. She faints—my *Eleonora!*
Look up, and bleſs me with thy gentle eyes!———
The colour comes, her cheeks reſume their beauty,
And all her charms revive—Hence, ſpurn the carcaſs:
A ſight too ſhocking for my *Eleonora.*
Eleon. And lives my *Edward*, lives my deareſt lord,
From this aſſaſſin ſav'd?—Alas! you bleed!
Edw. 'Tis

Edw. 'Tis nought, my lovely princeſs!---A ſlight wound———

Eleon. But, ah! me thought, I entering heard of poiſon,
Tainting the blood---What! was the dagger poiſon'd?---
Ha! ſilent all? will none relieve my fears?———

Gloſt. Madam, reſtrain your tenderneſs a moment---
The prince delays too long---Let him retire.
Mean-while, the troubled camp ſhall be my care;
Leſt the baſe foe ſhould make a ſudden ſally,
While yet our troops are ſtun'd with this diſaſter.

Edw. I thank thee, noble *Gloſter.* Nor, alone
Support my troops; go, rouſe them to revenge;
Tell them their injur'd prince will try their love,
Their valor ſoon---And you my friend, good *Theald,*
Attend the princeſs---Chear thee, *Eleonora!*
I cannot, will not, leave thee long, to vex
Thy tender ſoul with aggravated fears.

Thea. Behold *Daraxa,* the falſe Sultan's bride.

SCENE VI.

ELEONORA, THEALD, DARAXA.

Dar. Princeſs of *England,* let me ſhare thy grief.
Whence flow theſe tears? and what this wild alarm,
This noiſe of murder and aſſaſſination?

Eleon. Alas! the prince is wounded by a ruffian;
And with a poiſon'd dagger, as I fear.
Yet none will eaſe me of this racking thought—
Nay, tell me, *Theald,* ſince to know the worſt
Is oft a kind of miſerable comfort;
What has befallen the prince? For this ſlight wound
Could never thus o'ercaſt the brave with terror.

Thea. I dare not, princeſs, dally with your fate.
An impious villain, from the Sultan *Selim,*

Pretended

Pretended to the prince a ſecret meſſage,
About the peace in treaty. Dreading nought,
He left us here, and to his tent retir'd,
There to receive this execrable envoy.
Strait with the prince alone, the fierce aſſaſſin,
Attempted on his life; but, in his arm,
He took, it ſeems, the blow, and from the villain
Wreſting the dagger, plung'd it to his heart.
This laſt we ſaw, and heard th' inhuman bigot,
Who deem'd himſelf a martyr in their cauſe,
Boaſt, as he dy'd, the prince's wound was poiſon'd—

Eleon. Then all I fear'd is true! then am I wretched,
Beyond even hope!

Dar. A villain from the Sultan!———

Eleon. Ah the diſtracting thonght! And is my life!
My love! my *Edward*! on the brink of fate!
Of fate that may this moment ſnatch him from me!

Dar. What! *Selim* ſend aſſaſſins? and beneath
A name ſo ſacred? *Selim*, whoſe renown
Is incenſe breathing o'er the ſweeten'd eaſt;
For each humane, each generous virtue famed;
Selim! the rock of faith! and ſun of honour!

Eleon. O complicated woe! The Chriſtian cauſe
Has now no more a patron, and reſtorer;
England no more a prince, in whom ſhe plac'd
Her glory, her delight, her only hope;
Theſe deſolated troops no more a chief;
No more a huſband, a protector, I,
A friend, a lover! and my helpleſs children
No more a father!

Dar. Pardon, gentle princeſs,
If in this whirlwind of revolving paſſions,
That ſnatch my ſoul by turns, I have forgot
To pay the tribute which I owe thy ſorrows---

But

But I myſelf, alas! am more unhappy!
Eleon. What woes can equal mine? who loſe, thus vilely,
The beſt! the braveſt! lovelieſt of mankind!---
Dar. You only *loſe* the man you love; but I,
O inſupportable! muſt learn to *hate*,
To *ſcorn* what once was all my pride and tranſport!
Should *Edward* die by this accurſed crime,
(Which heaven forbid) he dies admir'd, belov'd,
In the full bloom of fame and ſpotleſs honour.
To you, the daughter of illuſtrious grief,
Your tears remain, and ſadly-ſweet reflection;
You with his image, with his virtues, ſtill,
Amidſt the penſive gloom, may converſe hold:
While I---Ah! nothing meets my blaſted ſight!
But a black view of infamy and horror!
What is the loſs of life to loſs of virtue!---
And yet how can this heavenly ſpark be loſt?
No! virtue burns with an immortal flame.
He is bely'd---ſome villain has abus'd him.
Thea. I honour, Madam, this your virtuous grief!
But that the Sultan did employ th' aſſaſſin
Is paſt all doubt---Behold the falſe inſtructions,
By which he gain'd admittance.
[*Giving her the letter the prince had dropt.*
Dar. Ha!————'Tis ſo!
His hand! his ſeal!---From my deteſting heart,
I tear him thus for ever!---Periſh, *Selim!*
Periſh the feeble wretch, who more bewails him!
That were to ſhare his guilt!—Unhappy princeſs!
Now let me turn my ſoul to thy aſſiſtance—
There is a cure, 'tis true—
Eleon. A cure, *Daraxa!*
O ſay, what cure?

Dar.

Dar. No; it avails not, madam;
None can be found to riſque it.
Eleon. None to riſque it?
Quick tell me what it is, my dear *Daraxa.*
Dar. To find ſome perſon, that, with friendly lip,
May draw the poiſon forth; at leaſt, its rage
And mortal ſpirit. This will bring the wound
Within the power of art: but certain death
Attends the generous deed.
Eleon. [*kneeling.*] Then hear me, heaven!
Prime ſource of love! Ye ſaints and angels, hear me
I here devote me for the beſt of men,
Of princes and of huſbands. On this croſs
I ſeal the cordial vow: confirm it, heaven!
And grant me courage in the hour of trial!
Thea. O tenderneſs unequal'd!
Dar. Glorious princeſs!
Eleon. Go, *Theald*, quickly find the earl of *Gloſter*,
And with him break this matter to the prince.
As for the perſon, leave that taſk to me.
I with *Daraxa* will your call attend;
O all ye powers of love, your influence lend.

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II. SCENE I.

GLOSTER, THEALD.

Gloſt. NO, *Theald*, no; he never will conſent—
I know him well; he ne'er will purchaſe life
At ſuch a rate: beſides, in aid of love,
His generous pride would come, and deem it baſeneſs.
Thea. Then

Thea. Then is yon ſun his laſt. The blackning wound
Begins already to confeſs the poiſon—
Meantime, my lord, both friendſhip and our duty
Demand, at leaſt, the trial. Well I know,
That poiſe his life with hers, he would as nothing
Eſteem his own: but ſure the life of thouſands,
The mingled cauſe at once of heaven and earth,
Should o'er the beſt, the deareſt life prevail.

Gloſt. Alas! my friend, you *reaſon, Edward loves.*
How weak the head contending with the heart!
Yet be the trial made—Behold he comes.

SCENE II.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD.

Edw. [*entering.*] O thou bright ſun! now haſt'ning to thoſe climes,
That parent-iſle, which I no more ſhall ſee;
And for whoſe welfare oft my youthful heart
Has vainly form'd ſo many a fond deſign;
O thither bear, reſplendent orb of day,
To that dear ſpot of earth, my laſt farewell!
And oh! eternal Providence, whoſe courſe,
Amidſt the various maze of life, is fix'd
By boundleſs wiſdom and by boundleſs love,
I follow thee, with reſignation, hope,
With confidence and joy: for thou art good,
And of thy riſing goodneſs is no end!
Well met, my deareſt friends!—It was too true
The villain's threatening, and I nearly touch
That awful hour which every man muſt prove,
Yet every man ſtill ſhifts at diſtance from him.
Come then, and let us fill the ſpace between

Theſe laſt important moments, whence we take
Our lateſt tincture for eternity,
With ſolemn converſe and exalting friendſhip—
Nay—*Theald*—*Gloſter*—wound me not with tears,
With tears that fall o'er venerable cheeks!
What could the princeſs more?—Ah! there, indeed,
At every thought of her, I feel a weight,
A dreadful weight of tenderneſs, that ſhakes
My firmeſt reſolution—Where is ſhe!

Thea. She burns with fond impatience to attend you.

Edw. And how, brave *Gloſter*, did you leave the camp?

Gloſt. The camp, Sir, is ſecure: each ſoldier there
From indignation draws new force and ſpirit.
O 'tis a glorious, an affecting ſight!
Thoſe furrow'd cheeks that never knew before
The dew of tears, now in a copious ſhower
Are bath'd. Around your tent they, anxious, crowd,
Rank over rank: ſome preſſing for a look;
Some ſadly muſing, with dejected eye;
Some, on their knees, preferring vows to heaven;
And, with extended arm, ſome breathing vengeance.
" Baſe *Saracens*, they cry, perfidious cowards!
" But blood ſhall waſh out blood—Ah! poor atonement,
" Did the whole bleeding city fall a victim!"

Edw. Alas, that to repay their faithful love
I cannot live!—Yet moderate their zeal;
And let the ſword of juſtice only ſtrike
The faithleſs *Selim*, and his guilty council.
My new-departed ſpirit, juſt eſcap'd
From the low fev'riſh paſſions of this life,
Would grieve to ſee the blood of innocence,
With that of guilt confounded, ſtain my tomb.

Thea. Permit me, Sir, the hope, that you yourſelf—
I ſpeak

I ſpeak it on juſt cauſe—may live to puniſh
This breach of all the ſacred rights of men.
Edw. Why will you turn my thoughts, from earth enlarg'd,
To ſoft enfeebling views of life again?
Thea. Not to a vain deſire of life, my lord,
I would recal them; but inſpire each hope,
Adviſe each poſſibility to ſave it.
And there is yet a remedy.
Edw. Deluſion!
Thea. The fair *Arabian* princeſs mention'd one.
Edw. She one!—*Daraxa!*—ſomething to compleat
Her lover's crime.
Thea. You could not wrong her thus,
Had you beheld the tempeſt of her ſoul,
Her grief, her rage, confuſion, when ſhe heard
Of *Selim*'s baſeneſs; had you ſeen that honour,
That glorious fire which darted from her eyes;
'Till in a flood of virtuous ſorrow ſunk
She almoſt equal'd *Eleonora*'s tears.
Edw. What was it ſhe propos'd?
Thea. It was, my lord,
To find ſome perſon, who, with friendly lip,
Might draw the deady ſpirit——
Edw. I have heard
Of ſuch a cure; but is it not, good *Theald*,
An action fatal to the kind performer?
Thea. Yes, ſurely fatal.
Edw. Name it then no more.
I ſhould deſpiſe the paltry life it purchas'd.
Beſides, what mortal can diſpoſe ſo raſhly
Of his own life? Talk not of low condition,
And of my public rank: when life or death
Becomes the queſtion, all diſtinctions vaniſh;

Then the firſt monarch and the loweſt ſlave
On the ſame level ſtand, in this the ſons
Of equal nature all.
Thea. Allow me, Sir,
If 'tis a certain, an eſtabliſh'd duty,
Than duty more, the height of human virtue,
To ſacrifice a tranſitory life
For that kind ſource from whence it is deriv'd,
And all its guarded joys, our deareſt country;
It may be juſtly ſacrific'd for thoſe
On whom depends the welfare of the public.
And there is one, my lord, who ſtands devoted,
By ſolemn and irrevocable vows,
To die for you.
Edw. To die for me!—Kind nature!
Thanks to thy forming hand, I can myſelf,
Chearful, ſuſtain to pay this debt I owe thee,
Without the borrow'd ſufferings of another.
No, *Theald*, urge this argument no more.
I love not life to that degree, to purchaſe,
By the ſure death of ſome brave guiltleſs friend,
A few uncertain days, that often riſe,
Like this, ſerene and gay, when, with ſwift wing,
A moment wraps them in diſaſtrous fate.
Gloſt. Did we conſult to ſave your ſingle life,
Was that the preſent queſtion, thy refuſal
Were juſt, were generous. But, my lord, this perſon,
Who ſtands for you devoted, ſhould, in that
Be deem'd devoted for the chriſtian cauſe,
The common cauſe of *Europe* and thy country;
Dies for the brave companions of thy fortune,
Who weeping now around thy tent conjure thee
To live for them, and *England*'s promis'd glory.
O ſave our country, *Edward!* ſave a nation,

The

The choſen land, the laſt retreat of freedom,
Amidſt a world enſlaved!—Caſt back thy view,
And trace from fartheſt times her old renown.
Think of the blood, that, to maintain her rights,
And guard her ſheltering laws, has flow'd in battle,
Or on the patriot's ſcaffold. Think what cares,
What vigilance, what toils, what bright contention,
In councils, camps, and well-diſputed ſenates,
It coſt our generous anceſtors, to raiſe
A matchleſs plan of freedom: whence we ſhine,
Even in the jealous eye of hoſtile nations,
The happieſt of mankind.—Then ſee all this,
This virtue, wiſdom, toil and blood of ages,
Behold it ready to be loſt for ever.
In this important, this deciſive hour,
On thee, and thee alone, our weeping country
Turns her diſtreſsful eye; to thee ſhe calls,
And with a helpleſs parent's piercing voice.
Wilt thou not live for her? for her ſubdue
A graceful pride, I own, but ſtill a pride,
That more becomes thy courage and thy youth,
Than birth and public ſtation? Nay, for her,
Say, wouldſt thou not reſign the deareſt paſſions?

Edw. O there is nothing, which for thee, my country,
I, in my proper perſon, could not ſuffer!
But thus to ſculk behind another's life,
'Tis what I have not courage to ſupport,
It makes a kind of coward of me, *Gloſter.*
But let me ſee this friend, whoſe generous virtue
Exceeds what even my favourable thoughts
Had imag'd in the ſelfiſh race of man.
The purpoſe claims the merit of the deed;
And ere I die I muſt requite his friendſhip.
Conduct him hither, *Theald.*

SCENE III.

EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. Ah, my *Gloſter*,
You have not touch'd on ſomething that here pleads
For longer life, beyond the force of reaſon,
Perhaps too powerful pleads—my *Eleonora!*
To thee, my friend, I will not be aſham'd
Even to avow my love in all its fondneſs.
For oh there ſhines in this my dearer ſelf!
This partner of my ſoul! ſuch a mild light
Of careleſs charms, of unaffected beauty,
Such more than beauty, ſuch endearing goodneſs,
That when I meet her eye, where cordial faith,
And every gentle virtue mix their luſtre,
I feel a tranſport that partakes of anguiſh!
How ſhall I then behold her, on the point
To leave her, *Gloſter*, in a diſtant land?
For ever in a ſtormy world to leave her?
There is no miſery to be fear'd like that
Which from our greateſt happineſs proceeds!

SCENE IV.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD *preſenting the princeſs* ELEONORA *as the perſon he went to bring*, DARAXA.

Edw. O heaven!—what do I ſee?—I am betray'd!—
[*Turning away.*]

Eleon. Edward!

Edw. O 'tis too much! O ſpare me, nature!

Eleon. Not look upon me, *Edward?*

Edw. Eleonora!
How on this dreadful errand canſt thou come?

Eleon. Behold

Eleon. Behold me kneel——
Edw. Why kneel you, beſt of women!
You ne'er offended, ne'er in thought offended!
Thou art all truth, and love, and angel-goodneſs!
Why do you kneel? O riſe, my *Eleonora!*
Eleon. Let me fulfil my vow.
Edw. O never! never!—
Eleon. Let me preſerve a life, in which is wrapt
The life of thouſands dearer than my own!
Live thou, and let me die for thee, my *Edward!*
Edw. For me! thy words are daggers to my ſoul:
And wouldſt thou have me then thus meanly ſave
A deſpicable life! a life expos'd
To that worſt torment, to my own contempt!
A life ſtill haunted by the cruel image
Of thy laſt pangs, thy agonizing throws,
The dire convulſions of theſe tender limbs;
And all for one—O infamy!—for one,
By love, by duty bound, each manly tie,
Even by a peaſant's honour, to protect thee?
Yet this, tho' ſtrong, invincible, is nought
To what my wounded tenderneſs could urge
Againſt thy dire requeſt—But ſhould fate demand
The life we love, then, then, we muſt exert
The greateſt act of human reſignation;
We muſt ſubmit. But wouldſt thou have me, ſay,
Doom thee myſelf? with voluntary choice,
Nay, by a barbarous crime, untimely ſnatch
This worſt of ills? Would *Eleonora* make me
Of all mankind the moſt compleatly wretched?
Eleon. Plead not the voice of honour. Well I know,
There is no danger, pain, no form of death,
Thou wouldſt not meet with tranſport to protect me.
But I, alas! an unimportant woman,

Whoſe only boaſt and merit is to love thee;
Ah, what am I, with nameleſs numbers weigh'd?
With myriads yet unborn? All ranks, all ages,
All arts, all virtues, all a ſtate comprizes?
Theſe have a higher claim to thy protection.
Live then for them.—O make a generous effort!
What none but heroes can, bid the ſoft paſſions,
The private ſtoop to thoſe that graſp the public.
Live to poſſeſs the pleaſure of a God,
To bleſs a people truſted to thy care,
Live to fulfil thy long career of glory,
But juſt begun. To die for thee be mine.
I ne'er can find a brighter happier fate!
And fate will come at laſt, inglorious fate!
O grudge me not a portion of thy fame!
As join'd in love, O raiſe me to thy glory!

Edw. In vain is all thy eloquence. The more
Thou wouldſt perſuade, I, with encreaſing horror,
Fly from thy purpoſe.

Eleon. Doſt thou love me, *Edward?*

Edw. Oh!—If I love thee?—Witneſs heaven and earth!
Angels of death, that hover round me, witneſs!
Witneſs theſe blinded eyes, theſe trembling arms,
This heart that beats unutterable fondneſs,
To what an agony I love thee——

Eleon. Then
Thou ſure wilt ſave me from the worſt of pains.

Edw. O that I could from all engroſs thy ſufferings!
Pain felt for thee were pleaſure!

Eleon. Hear me, *Edward.*
I ſpeak the ſtricteſt truth, no flight of paſſion;
I ſpeak my naked heart.—To die, I own,
Is a dread paſſage, terrible to nature,

Chiefly

Chiefly to thoſe who have, like me, been happy.—
But to ſurvive thee—O 'tis greatly worſe!
'Tis a continual death! I cannot bear
The very thought—O leave me not behind thee!
Edw. Since nought can alter my determin'd breaſt,
Why doſt thou pierce me with this killing image?
Eleon. Ah! ſelfiſh that thou art! with thee the toil,
The tedious toil of life will ſoon be o'er;
Thou ſoon wilt hide thee in the quiet grave:
While I, a lonely widow, with my orphans,
Am left defenceleſs to a troubled world,
A falſe, ingrateful, and injurious world!——
Oh! if thou lov'ſt me, *Edward*, I conjure thee,
By that celeſtial flame which blends our ſouls!
By all a father, all a mother feels!
By every holy tenderneſs, I charge thee!
Live to protect the pledges of our love,
Our children!—
Edw. Oh!—
Eleon. Our young, our helpleſs—
Edw. Oh!—
Diſtraction!—Let me go!
Eleon. Nay, drag me with thee———
To the kind tomb—Thou canſt not leave our children
Expos'd, by being thine, beyond the loweſt!
Surrounded with the perils of a throne!—
Edw. Cruel! no more embitter thus our laſt,
Our parting moments! Set no more the terrors
Of theſe beſt paſſions in array againſt me!
For by that power, I ſwear, Father of life!
Whoſe univerſal love embraces all
That breathes this ample air; whoſe perfect wiſdom
Brings light from darkneſs, and from evil good;
To whom I recommend thee, and my children:

By Him I ſwear! I never will ſubmit
To what thy horrid tenderneſs propoſes!
Gloſt. My lord——
Edw. Oh!—theſe emotions are too much—
I feel a heavy languor ſteal upon me:
The working poiſon clogs the ſprings of life.
Conduct me to my couch—Ah! *Eleonora!*
If we ne'er meet again—This one embrace—
Yet ſink not to deſpair—Heaven may preſerve me
By means ſuperior to all human hope.
Eleon. I will not, cannot quit thee!—

SCENE V.

ELEONORA, DARAXA.

Dar. Princeſs, ſtay.
Think not the hand of death is yet upon him;
Reſiſtleſs ſleep will firſt oppreſs his ſenſes,
Before the laſt convulſive pangs come on;
For ſo the numbing poiſon oft begins
To ſpread its dark malignity.—
Eleon. Ha!—Sleep!
Then is the time—Thanks to inſpiring heaven!
But come, and ere the venom ſink too deep,
Swift let me ſeize the favouring hour of ſleep.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

GLOSTER.

O Miracle of love! O wondrous princeſs!
'Tis ſuch as thou, who keep the gentle flame,
That

That animates ſociety, alive,
Who make the dwellings of mankind delightful.
What is vain life? an idle flight of days,
A ſtill-deluſive round of fickly joys,
A ſcene of little cares and trifling paſſions,
If not ennobled by ſuch deeds of virtue?
And yet this matchleſs virtue! what avails it?
Th' afflicting angel has forſook the prince,
And now pours out his terrors on the princeſs.
Forſook him, ſaid I?—No; he muſt awake
To keener evils than the body knows,
Which minds alone, and generous minds can feel.
O virtue! virtue! as thy joys excel,
So are thy woes tranſcendent; the groſs world
Knows not the bliſs or miſery of either——
The prince forſakes his couch—He ſeems renew'd
In health——Ah, ſhort deceitful gleam of eaſe!

SCENE II.

EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. [*advancing from his couch.*] Hail to the freſher earth and brighter day!
I feel me lighten'd of the mortal load
That lay upon my ſpirits. This kind ſleep
Has ſhed a balmy quiet through my veins.
Whence this amazing change?———
But be my firſt chief care, Author of good!
To bend my ſoul in gratitude to thee!
Thou, when blind mortals wander thro' the deeps
Of comfortleſs deſpair, with timely hand,
Inviſible, and by unthought-of ways,
Thus leadſt'ſt them forth into thy light again.

Gloſt. How fares my lord, the prince?

Edw. To health reſtor'd.
Only a kind of laſſitude remains,
A not unpleaſing weakneſs hangs upon me:
Like the ſoft trembling of the ſettled deep,
After a ſtorm.
Gloſt. Father of health be prais'd!
Edw. The moment that I ſunk upon my couch,
A ſick and troubled ſlumber fell upon me;
Chaos of gloomy unconnected thought!
That, in black eddy whirl'd, made ſleep more dreadful
Than the worſt waking pang. While thus I toſs'd,
Ready to bid farewell to ſuffering clay,
Methought an angel came and touch'd my wound.
At this the parting gloom clear'd up apace;
My ſlumbers ſoften'd; and, with health, return'd
Serenity of mind, and order'd thought,
And fair ideas gladdening all the ſoul.
Aërial muſic too, by fancy heard,
Sooth'd my late pangs and harmoniz'd my breaſt.
Thro' ſhades of bliſs I walk'd, where heavenly forms
Sung to their lutes my *Eleonora*'s love—
But where is ſhe? the glory of her ſex!
O dearer, juſtly dearer, far than ever!
Quick, let me find her, pour into her boſom
My full, full ſoul, with tenderneſs o'ercharg'd,
With glad ſurprize, with gratitude and wonder.—
Ha! why this ſilence? this dejected look?
You caſt a drooping eye upon the ground.
Where is the princeſs?
Gloſt. She, my lord, repoſes.
Edw. Repoſes!—No!—It is not likely, *Gloſter*,
That ſhe would yield her weeping eyes to ſleep,
While I lay there in agonies—away!
I am too feeble then to know the truth.

Say,

Say, is ſhe well?

Gloſt. Now ſhow thy courage, *Edward*——

Edw. O all my fears! I ſhall ſtart out to madneſs!
What!—while I ſlept?

Gloſt. Yes———

Edw. Miſery! diſtraction!
My peace, my honour is betray'd for ever!
O love! O ſhame! O murder'd *Eleonora!*

SCENE III.

GLOSTER.

Unhappy prince! go find thy *Eleonora*,
And in heart-eaſing grief exhale thy paſſion:
All other comfort, now, were to talk down
The winds and raging ſeas—But yonder comes
Th' *Arabian* princeſs. From her tears I learn
The moving ſcene within.

SCENE IV.

GLOSTER, DARAXA, *a meſſenger from* SELIM, *attending at ſome diſtance.*

Dar. O! 'tis too much!
I can no more ſupport it.

Gloſt. Generous mourner,
How is it with the princeſs *Eleonora?*

Dar. Struck by the poiſon on her couch ſhe lyes,
A roſe ſoft-drooping in *Sabean* vales,
Beneath the fiery dog-ſtar's noxious rage.
O Chriſtian chief, I never ſhall forget
The ſcene theſe melting eyes have juſt beheld,
With mingled tears of tenderneſs and wonder.

Gloſt. How was it, madam?

Dar. When

Dar. When this pride of women,
This beſt of wives which in his radiant courſe
The ſun beholds, when firſt ſhe, ſickening, felt
Th' imperious ſummons of approaching fate,
All rob'd in ſpotleſs white ſhe ſought the altar;
And, proſtrate there, for her departing ſoul,
The prince her huſband, and her orphan-children,
Implor'd th' Eternal Mind.—As yet ſhe held
Her ſwelling tears, and in her boſom kept
Her ſighs repreſs'd: nor did the near approach
Of the pale king of terrors dim her beauty;
No, rather, adding to her charms, it breath'd
A certain mournful ſweetneſs thro' her features:
But as th' increaſing bane more deſperate grew,
Wild to her bed ſhe ruſh'd; and then, indeed,
The lovely fountains of her eyes were open'd,
Then flow'd her tears.—"Connubial bed," ſhe cry'd,
"Chaſte witneſs of my tenderneſs for him,
"To ſave whoſe life I unrepining die
"In bloom of youth, farewel!—Thou ſhalt, perhaps,
"Receive a fairer, a more happy bride;
"But never a more faithful, never one
"Who loves her huſband with a fonder paſſion."
Here flow'd her tears afreſh; with burning lip
She preſs'd the humid couch, and wept again.
At laſt, while weary ſorrow paus'd, ſhe roſe,
And, fearing leſt immediate death might ſeize her,
Demanded to be led to ſee the prince;
But fear of chaſing from his eyes, too ſoon,
The ſalutary ſleep that heal'd his pangs,
Reſtrain'd her trembling footſteps. On her couch,
Abandon'd to deſpair, ſhe ſunk anew,
And for her children call'd. Her children came.
A while, ſupported on her arm, ſhe ey'd them,

With

With tears purſuing tears a-down her cheek,
With all the ſpeechleſs miſery of woe—
I ſee her ſtill—O GOD! the powerful image
Diſſolves me into tears!
Gloſt. Madam, proceed.
Such tears are virtue, and excel the joys
Of wanton pride.
Dar. Then ſtarting up, ſhe went
To ſnatch them to a mother's laſt embrace;
When ſtrait, reflecting that the piercing poiſon
Might taint their tender years, ſhe ſudden ſhrunk
With horror back—"O wretched *Eleonora!*
" (She weeping cry'd) and muſt I then not taſte
" The poor remaining comfort of the dying,
" To ſee a huſband, claſp my deareſt children,
" And mix my parting ſoul with theirs I love?
Her ſad attendants, that till then had mourn'd
In ſilent ſorrow, all, at this, gave way
To loud laments—She rais'd her languid eye,
And caſting on them round a gracious ſmile,
To each by name ſhe call'd, even to the loweſt,
To each extended mild her friendly hand,
Gave, and, by turns, receiv'd a laſt farewel.
Such is the dreadful ſcene from which I come.
Gloſt. How heighten'd now with *Edward's* mingled woes!
Why are my lingering years reſerv'd for this?
Dar. Come nearer, you, the meſſenger of *Selim*,
And bear him back this anſwer—His chief aim,
He ſays, in ſtooping to ſolicit peace,
Was from the chains of Infidels to ſave me.
What! was it then to reſcue me he ſent,
Beneath an all-rever'd and ſacred name,
Beneath the ſhelter of his hand and ſeal,

A murdering

A murdering wretch, a ſacrilegious bigot,
To ſtab at once the gallant prince of *England*,
And public faith? nay, with a poiſon'd dagger
(Such his inhuman cowardice) to ſtab him?
So well; 'tis true, he judg'd; the Chriſtian prince
Had now been mingled with the harmleſs dead;
If his bright princeſs, glorious *Eleonora*,
Had not redeem'd his dearer life with her's.
You heard in what extremity ſhe lies.
Go, tell the tyrant then—O heaven and earth!
O vanity of virtue! that *Daraxa*
Should e'er to *Selim* ſend ſo fell a meſſage———
I will ſuppreſs its bitterneſs—Yet tell him.
This crime has plac'd eternal bars betwixt us.
See my laſt tear to love---*Arabian* wilds
Shall bury 'midſt their rocks the loſt *Daraxa*.
Away!

Gloſt. Behold, they bear this way the princeſs,
Once more to taſte the ſweetneſs of the ſun,
Ere yet to mortal light ſhe bid farewel.

SCENE V.

GLOSTER, DARAXA, THEALD, EDWARD, ELEONORA *born in by her attendants on a couch.*

Eleon. [*entering.*] A little on, a little further on,
Bear me, my friends, into the cooling air.
O chearful ſun! O vital light of day!

Edw. That ſun is witneſs of our matchleſs woes,
Is witneſs of our innocence---Alas!
What have we done to merit this diſaſter?

Eleon. O earth! O genial roofs! O the dear coaſt
Of *Albion*'s iſle! which I no more ſhall ſee!---

Edw. Nay, yield not to thy weakneſs, *Eleonora!*

Suſtain

Suſtain thyſelf a little, nor deſert me!
Th' all-ruling Goodneſs may relieve us ſtill.
Eleon. Edward! I tremble! terror ſeizes on me!
Thro' the rent veil of yon ſurrounding ſky,
I had a glimpſe, I ſaw th' eternal world.
They call, they urge me hence---Yes, I obey.
But O forgive me, heaven! if 'tis with pain,
With agonies, I tear my ſoul from his!
Edw. Heavens! what I ſuffer!---How thy plaintive voice
Shoots anguiſh through my ſoul!
Eleon. Some power unſeen---
Thy hand, my *Edward*---ſome dark power unſeen
Is dragging me away---O yet a little,
A little, ſpare me!---Ah! how ſhall I leave
My weeping friends, my huſband and my children?
Edw. Unhappy friends! O greatly wretched huſband
And O poor careleſs orphans, who not feel
The depth of your misfortune!
Eleon. Lay me down;
Soft, lay me down---my powers are all diſſolv'd---
A little forward bend me---Oh!
Edw. O heav'n!
How that ſoft frame is torn with cruel pangs!
Pangs robb'd from me!
Eleon. 'Tis thence they borrow eaſe---
My children! O my children! you no more
Have now a mother; now, alas! no more
Have you a mother, O my hapleſs children!
Edw. What do I hear! What deſolating words
Are theſe? more bitter than a thouſand deaths!
Death to my ſoul! Call up thy failing ſpirit,
And leave me not to miſery and ruin!
Eleon. Edward, I feel an interval of eaſe;

And ere I die, have ſomething to impart
That will relieve my ſufferings.
Edw. Speak, my ſoul!
Speak thy deſire: I live but to fulfil it.
Eleon. Thou ſeeſt in what a hopeleſs ſtate I lie,
I who this morning roſe in pride of youth,
High-blooming, promis'd many happy years,
I die for thee, I ſelf-devoted die.
Think not, from this, that I repent my vow:
Or that, with little vanity, I boaſt it:
No; what I did, from unrepenting love
I chearful did, from love that knows no fear,
No pain, no weak remiſſion of its ardor.
And what, alas! what was it but the dictate
Of honour, and of duty? nay, 'twas ſelfiſh,
To ſave me from unſufferable pain,
From dragging here a wretched life without thee.
Two fears yet ſtand betwixt my ſoul and peace.
One is for thee, leſt thou diſturb my grave
With tears of wild deſpair. Grieve not like thoſe
Who have no hope. We yet ſhall meet again;
We ſtill are in a kind Creator's hand;
Eternal goodneſs reigns. Beſides, this parting,
This parting, *Edward*, muſt have come at laſt,
When years of friendſhip had, perhaps, exalted
Our love, if that can be, to keener anguiſh.
Think what thy ſtation, what thy fame demanded;
Nor yield thy virtue even to worthy paſſions.
My other care—my other care is idle—
From that thy equal tenderneſs with mine,
Thy love and generoſity ſecure me.
Our children———
Edw. Yes, I penetrate thy fear,
But hear me, dying ſweetneſs! On this hand;

This

This cold pale hand I vow, our children never,
Shall never call another by the name
Sacred to thee; my *Eleonora*'s children
Shall never feel the hateful power thou fear'ſt.
As one in life, ſo death cannot divide us.
Nor high deſcent, nor beauty, nought that woman,
In her unbounded vanity of heart,
Can wiſh, ſhall ever tempt my faith from thee.
Shall ever, ſaid I? Piteous boaſt indeed!
O nothing *can!*—I ſhould be groſs of heart,
Taſteleſs and dull as earth to think with patience,
Without abhorrence, of a ſecond *Hymen*,
Where can I find ſuch beauty? Where ſuch grace,
The ſoul of beauty? Where ſuch winning charms?
Where ſuch a ſoft divinity of goodneſs?
Such faith? ſuch love? ſuch tenderneſs unequal'd?
Such all that heaven could give—to make me wretched!
Talk not of comfort—Into what a gulph
A lone abyſs of miſery I fall.
The moment that I loſe thee—Oh! I know not!
I dare not think!—But theſe unhappy orphans—
Ah the dire-cauſe that makes it double duty———
Shall now be doubly mine; to ſhelter them,
Theſe pledges of our love, I will attempt
To brave the horrors of loath'd life without thee.

Eleon. Enough! it is enough! On this condition
Receive them from my hands.

Edw. Dear hands! dear gift!
Dear, precious, dying, miſerable gift!
With tranſport once receiv'd, but now with anguiſh!

Eleon. All ſoft'ning time will heal my woes. The dead
Soon leave the paſſions of the living free.

Edw. Deteſted

Edw. Deteſted life!—O take me, take me with thee.

Eleon. No, *Edward*, live: or elſe I die in vain.

Edw. Raiſe, raiſe, my *Eleonora*, thy ſweet eyes,
Once more behold thy children———

Eleon. Oh!---'Tis darkneſs——
A deadly weight———.

Edw. Thou leav'ſt me then for ever!

Eleon. Where am I?—Ah—a tenant ſtill to pain.
The quivering flame of life leaps up a little.
Meantime, my *Edward*, 'tis my laſt requeſt,
That thou would'ſt leave me, while I yet enjoy
A parting gleam of thought---Leave me to Heaven!--
Gloſter---farewel---Be careful of the prince---
Attend him hence---and double now thy friendſhip!--

Edw. Barbarian! off!---Ah! whither would'ſt thou drag me!

Gloſt. My lord, in pity to the princeſs---

Edw. Oh!

Eleon. Farewel! farewel!---Receive my laſt adieu,
Edward! my deareſt lord! farewel for ever!

Edw. O word of horror!---Can I?---No! I cannot!
There, take me, lead me, hurl me to perdition!

SCENE VI.

ELEONORA, DARAXA, THEALD, *Attendants.*

Eleon. 'Tis paſt, the bitterneſs of death is paſt---
Alas! *Daraxa*, I can ne'er requite
Thy generous cares for me. Thou art the cauſe
My *Edward* lives, my children have a father,
Thy heaven-inſpir'd propoſal---Tell him, *Theald*,
That, in the troubled moments of our parting,
I had forgot to beg he would reſtore

Th'

Th' *Arabian* princeſs to her friends and country---
Thy hand---This ſure, howe'er in faith we differ,
Humanity, the ſoul of all religion,
May well permit.

Dar. By virtue's ſacred fire!
Our paradiſe, the garden of the bleſt,
Ne'er ſmil'd upon a purer ſoul than thine.
For me, think not of me; ſuch are my woes,
That I diſdain all care, deteſt relief:
My name is trod in duſt: thine beams for ever,
The richeſt gem that crowns the worth of woman.

Eleon. The guilt of *Selim* cannot ſtain thy virtues:
It rather lends them luſtre---Bear me back,
My dear attendants: and good *Theald*, come,
Come, aid my mounting ſoul to ſpring away,
From the lov'd fetters of this kindred clay.

END *of the* THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

THEALD, *and a gentleman belonging to him.*

Thea. TO me a derviſe? Thro' the furious camp,
Yet raging at the perfidy of *Selim*,
How did he ſafely paſs?

Gent. Sir, he had fallen
A victim to their vengeance: but he told them,
His life was of importance to the prince,
That he who ſtruck him ſtabb'd the heart of *Edward*.
This ſtay'd their rage; then, after a ſtrict ſearch,
They let him paſs thro' ranks of glaring eyes.
I have beſides to ſay, an *Engliſh* ſhip

And

And one from *Italy* are juſt arriv'd:
The firſt brings great diſpatches to prince *Edward*!
The other, *holy father*, theſe to you. [*Kneeling.*
Thea, Go, bid this derviſe enter.

SCENE II.

THEALD: *he opens and look on the diſpatches.*

Awful Heaven!
Great ruler of the various heart of man!
Since thou haſt rais'd me to conduct thy church,
Without the baſe cabal too often practis'd,
Beyond my wiſh, my thought, give me the lights,
The virtues which that ſacred truſt requires:
A loving, lov'd, unterrifying power,
Such as becomes a father; humble wiſdom;
Plain, primitive ſincerity; kind zeal,
For truth and virtue rather than opinions;
And, above all, the charitable ſoul
Of healing peace and Chriſtian moderation.—
The *derviſe* comes.

SCENE III.

THEALD, SELIM *diſguis'd as a derviſe.*

Thea. With me what wouldſt thou, derviſe?
Sel. The princeſs *Eleonora* lives ſhe ſtill?
Thea. She lives, and that is all.
Sel. Allah be prais'd!
Then lives the honour of the brightning name
Of *Saracen* and *Muſſulman*.
Thea. How, derviſe?
What can wipe out the horror of this deed?
Sel. The deed was execrable; but my hand

This

This inſtant ſhall prevent its dire effect.
I bring a certain remedy for poiſon;
Nor can it come too late; while wandering life
Yet, with faint impulſe, ſtirs along the veins.

Thea. Ha! derviſe, art thou ſure of what thou ſay'ſt?

Sel. Chriſtian, I am; and therefore am I here.
Haſte, lead me to the princeſs: tho' ſhe lay
Even in the laſt extremity, tho' call'd
By the fierce angel who compels the dead,
Yet bold experience gives me room to hope.
Oft have I ſeen its vital touch diffuſe
New vigor thro' the poiſon'd ſtreams of life,
When almoſt ſettled into dead ſtagnation;
Swift as a ſouthern gale unbinds the flood.
Say, wilt thou truſt me with the trial, Chriſtian?

Thea. Thou know'ſt, we have great reaſon for diſtruſt;
But fear in thoſe who can no longer hope,
Were idle and abſurd.

Sel. Bright heaven! what fear?
Is there a ſlave of ſuch inhuman baſeneſs
To add freſh outrage to a dying princeſs?
For virtue dying? look into my eye:
Does one weak ray there ſhun the keeneſt gaze?
Say, doſt thou there behold ſo foul a bottom?

Thea. No; ſeeming truth and generous candor ſhine
In what thou ſay'ſt. Come, follow me, good derviſe.

SCENE IV.

THEALD, SELIM *diſguis'd*, DARAXA.

Dar. At laſt, thro' various pangs the dying princeſs
Sees the delivering moment, and demands
Thy preſence, reverend Chriſtian.

Thea. Derviſe

Thea. Derviſe, come.
Forbid it, Heaven, this aid ſhould be too late!

SCENE V.

DARAXA.

Heaven! can it be! the very face of *Selim!*
'Tis he himſelf—I know him, 'tis the Sultan;
And, as he ſhot athwart me, from his eye
Flaſh'd the proud lightning of affronted virtue.
He muſt be innocent; his being here
Is radiant proof he muſt—O weak DARAXA!
What man of virtue more would deign to lodge
His image in thy breaſt! Ah! what avails
The light unfounded love, the treacherous friendſhip,
That, with inhuman cowardice, gives up
A worthy man to infamy and ſlander?
They talk'd of aid—what aid?

[*A cry heard within.*

Alas! 'tis paſt!
Death muſt be in that cry. O let me fly
To ſnatch one parting look; but ſee the prince,
Rous'd by the ſounds of ſorrow, this way comes.
Unhappy prince! I venerate his tears——
O gracious Allah! pity and ſupport him. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

EDWARD.

That cry was death: Alas! ſhe is no more!
The matchleſs *Eleonora* is no more!——
Where am I?—Heavens!—Ah! what a hideous deſart
Is now this world, this blaſted world around me!
O ſun, I hate thee, I abhor thy light,

That

That ſhews not *Eleonora!* Earth, thy joy,
Thy ſweetneſs all is fled, all, all that made
Thy ways to me delightful, *Eleonora!*
O *Eleonora!* periſh'd *Eleonora!*
For ever loſt!—That tent! ah me! that tent!
[*Going into the tent ſtarts back:*
I dare not enter there. There death diſplays
His utmoſt terrors—Pale and lifeleſs there,
She lyes, whoſe looks were love, whoſe beauty ſmil'd
The ſweet effulgence of endearing virtue—
And here I laſt beheld her—Ay, and how,
And how beheld her!—The remorſeleſs image
Will haunt me to the grave---I ſee her ſuffering,
With female ſoftneſs, yet to pain ſuperior,
Fearful and bold at once, with the ſtrong hand
Of mighty love conſtraining feeble nature,
To ſteal me from affliction---Let me fly
This fatal ground---But whither ſhall I fly?
To *England*---O I cannot bear the thought
Of e'er returning to that country more!
That country, witneſs of our happy days,
Where at each ſtep remember'd bliſs will ſting
My ſoul to anguiſh. I already hear
Malice exclaim, nay, bluſhing valor ſigh:
Where is thy princeſs? where the wiſh of thouſands?
The charm, the tranſport of the public eye?
Baſe prince! and art thou not aſham'd to bring
No trophy home but *Eleonora*'s corſe?—
The grave too is ſhut up, that laſt retreat
Of wretched mortals---Yes, my word is paſs'd,
To *Eleonora* paſs'd. Our orphan-children
Bind me to life---O dear, O dangerous paſſions!
The valiant, in himſelf, what can he ſuffer?
Or what does he regard his ſingle woes?

But when, alas, he multiplies himſelf
To dearer ſelves, to the lov'd tender fair,
To thoſe whoſe bliſs, whoſe beings hang upon him,
To helpleſs children! then, O then! he feels
The point of miſery feſtring in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.
Such, ſuch am I! undone!---

SCENE VII.

EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. My lord of *Gloſter*,
I thought my orders were to be alone.
Gloſt. Forgive my fond intruſion. But I cannot
Be ſo regardleſs of thy welfare, *Edward*,
As to obey theſe orders.
Edw. But they ſhall,
Shall be obeyed---I will enjoy my ſorrows,
All that is left me now.
Gloſt. The more thy grief,
Juſt in its cauſe but frantic in degree,
Seeks aggravating ſolitude, the more
It ſuits my love and duty to attend thee,
To try to ſooth---
Edw. Away! thou never ſhalt.
Not all that idle wiſdom can ſuggeſt,
All the vain talk of proud unfeeling reaſon,
Shall rob me of one tear.
Gloſt. Of nature's tears
I would not rob thee: they invigorate virtue,
Soften, at once, and fortify the heart;
But when they riſe to ſpeak this deſperate language,
They then grow tears of weakneſs; yes---
Edw. I care not!
Weakneſs, whate'er they be, I will indulge them;

Will, in deſpite of thee and all mankind,
Devote my joyleſs days for ever to them.
Gloſt. Reaſon and virtue then are empty names?
Edw. Hence! leave me to my fate—You have undone me;
You have made ſhipwreck of my peace, among you,
My happineſs and honour; and I now
Roam the deteſted world, a careleſs wretch!
Gloſt. Thy honour yet is ſafe, how long I know not,
For full it drives upon the rocks of paſſion.
O all ye pitying powers that rule mankind!
Who ſo unworthy but may proudly deck him
With this fair-weather virtue, that exults,
Glad, o'er the ſummer main? The tempeſt comes,
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue ſhrinks, and in a corner lyes
Lamenting.—Heavens! if privileg'd from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue!
Edw. Do—inſult me—
Rail, ſpare me not—rail, *Gloſter*, all the world—
But know, mean-time, thou canſt not make me feel thee—
I have no more connection with mankind.
Gloſt. Inſult thee, *Edward?* Do theſe tears inſult thee?
Theſe old man's tears!—Friendſhip, my prince, can weep,
As well as love—But while I weep thy fortune,
Let me not weep thy virtue ſunk beneath it—
Thou haſt no more connection with mankind?
Put off thy craving ſenſes, the deep wants
And infinite dependencies of nature;
Put off that ſtrongeſt paſſion of the ſoul,
Soul of the ſoul, love to ſociety;

Put off all gratitude for what is paſt,
All generous hope of what is yet to come;
Put off each ſenſe of honour and of duty:
Then uſe this language.—Let me tell thee, *Edward*,
Thou haſt connections with mankind, and great ones,
Thou knoweſt not of; connections that might rouſe
The ſmalleſt ſpark of honour in thy breaſt,
To wide-awaken'd life and fair ambition.

Edw. What doſt thou mean?

Gloſt. What mean?—this day, in *England*,
How many aſk of *Paleſtine* their king,
Edward their king?—Read theſe—

Edw. [*opening the diſpatches.*] O *Gloſter!*—*Gloſter!*—
Alas! my royal father is no more!
The gentleſt of mankind, the moſt abus'd!
Of gracious nature, a fit ſoil for virtues,
'Till there his creatures ſow'd their flattering lies,
And made him—No, not all their curſed arts
Could ever make him inſolent or cruel.
O my deluded father! Little joy
Hadſt thou in life, led from thy real good,
And genuine glory, from thy people's love,
That nobleſt aim of kings, by ſmiling traitors.
Thus weak of heart, thus deſolate of ſoul,
Ah, how unfit am I, with ſteady hand,
To rule a troubled ſtate!—She, ſhe is gone,
Softner of care, the dear reward of toil,
The ſource of virtue! She, who to a crown
Had lent new ſplendor, who had grac'd a throne
Like the ſweet ſeraph mercy tempering juſtice.
O *Eleonora!* any life with thee,
The plaineſt could have charm'd: but pomp and plea-
ſure,
All that a loving people can beſtow,

By

By thee unſhared, will only ſerve to fret
The wounds of woe, and make me more unhappy!
Gloſt. Now is the time, now lift thy ſoul to virtue!
Behold a criſis, ſent by heaven, to ſave thee.
Whate'er, my prince, can touch, or can command,
Can quicken or exalt the heart of man,
Now ſpeaks to thine—Thy children claim their father,
Nay, more than father, claim their double parent;
For ſuch thy promiſe was to *Eleonora:*
Thy ſubjects claim their king, thy troops their chief:
The manes of thy anceſtors conſign
Their long deſcended glory to thy hands;
And thy dejected country calls upon thee
To ſave her, raiſe her, to reſtore her honour,
To ſpread her ſure dominion o'er the deep,
And bid her yet ariſe the ſcourge of *France.*
Angels themſelves might envy thee the joy,
That waits thy will, of doing general good:
Of ſpreading virtue, chearing lonely worth;
Of daſhing down the proud; of guarding arts,
The ſacred rights of induſtry and freedom;
Of making a whole generous people happy.
O *Edward! Edward!* the moſt piercing tranſports
Of the beſt love can never equal theſe!
And need I add—Thy *Eleonora*'s death
Calls out for vengeance—
Edw. Ha!
Gloſt. If thou, indeed,
Doſt honour thus her memory, then ſhew it,
Not by ſoft tears or womaniſh complaints,
But ſhew it like a man!
Edw. I will!
Gloſt. Yon towers!
Edw. Tis true!

Gloſt. Yon guilty towers!—
Edw. Inſult us ſtill!
Gloſt. The murderer of thy princeſs riots there!—
Edw. But ſhall not long!—Thou art my better genius,
Thou brave old man! thou haſt recall'd my virtue—
I was benumb'd with ſorrow—what—or where—
I know not—never to have thought of this.
Bright virtue, welcome! vigor of the mind!
The flame from heaven that lights up higher being!
Thrice welcome! with thy noble ſervant, anger,
And juſt revenge—Hence, let us to the camp,
And there transfuſe our ſoul into the troops,
This Sultan's blood will eaſe my fever'd breaſt.
Yes, I will take ſuch vengeance on this city,
That all mankind ſhall turn their eyes to *Jaffa*;
And as they ſee her turrets ſunk in duſt,
Shall learn to dread the terrors of the juſt.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SELIM.

O My *Daraxa!* thou haſt charm'd my ſoul!
This reconciling interview has ſooth'd
My troubled boſom into tender joy:
As when the ſpring firſt, on the ſoften'd top
Of *Lebanon*, unbinds her lovely treſſes,
And ſhakes her blooming ſweets from *Carmel*'s brow—
It only now remains to ſee the prince.——

SCENE II.

SELIM, THEALD.

Thea. I ſought thee, worthy derviſe.
Sel. Reverend

Sel. Reverend Chriſtian,
My toiling thoughts can find no fix'd repoſe,
'Till the wrong'd Sultan's vindicated honour
Shine out as bright as yon unſully'd ſky.
Conduct me to the prince—I claim that juſtice.—
It ſtings my conſcious ſoul with ſick impatience,
To think what *Selim* ſuffers. For a man,
Who loves the ways of truth and open virtue,
To lye beneath the burning imputation,
Of baſeneſs and of crimes—ſuch horrid crimes!—
O 'tis a keen unſufferable torment!
Come, let me then diſcharge this other part
Of my commiſſion.

Thea. That thou ſoon ſhalt do.
He ſtrait will come this way, the king of *England*,
Such now he is. Mean time, 'tis fit to tell thee,
He muſt be managed gently; for his paſſions
Are all abroad, in wild confuſion hurl'd:
The winds, the floods, and light'ning mix together.
I need not ſay how little, in this uproar,
Avails the broken thwarted light of reaſon.

Sel. Fear not.—I truſt in innocence and truth.

Thea. He cannot long delay; for, as I enter'd,
I ſaw him parting from the hurried camp,
That light'ned wide around him: burniſh'd helms
And glittering ſpears, and ardent thronging ſoldiers,
Demanding all the ſignal, when to ſtorm
Theſe walls devoted to their veangeance.—

Sel. Ha!
Then let us quickly find him—But he comes.

SCENE III.

SELIM, THEALD, EDWARD, GLOSTER.

Edw. Whence is it thoſe barbarians, here again,

Thoſe baſe, thoſe murdering cowards, dare be ſeen?
What new accurs'd attempt is now on foot?
What new aſſaſſination?—Start not, derviſe,
Tinge not thy caitiff cheek with red'ning honour.
What, thou!—Doſt thou pretend to feel reproach?
Art thou not of a ſhameleſs race of people,
Harden'd in arts of cruelty and blood,
Perfidious all? Yes, have you not profaned
The faith of nations? broke the holy tie
That binds the families of earth together,
That gives even foes to meet with generous truſt,
And teaches war ſecurity? Your prince,
Your prince has done it! And you ſhould hereafter
Be hunted from your dens like ſavage beaſts,
Be cruſh'd like ſerpents!

Thea. Sir, this derviſe comes,
To clear the Sultan *Selim* from that crime,
Which you, with ſtrong appearance, charge upon him.

Edw. Appearance, *Theald!* with unqueſtion'd proof.
Doubtleſs the villain would be glad to change
The courſe by nature fix'd, enjoy his crimes
Without their evil—But he ſhall not 'ſcape me!

Sel. If, king of *England*, in this weighty matter,
On which depends the weal and life of thouſands,
You love and ſeek the truth, let reaſon judge,
Cool, ſteady, quiet, and diſpaſſion'd reaſon.
For never yet, ſince the proud ſelfiſh race
Of men began to jar, did paſſion give,
Nor ever can it give, a right deciſion.

Edw. Reaſon has judg'd, and paſſion ſhall chaſtiſe,
Shall make you howl, ye cowards of the *Eaſt!*
What can be clearer? This vile prince of *Jaffa!*
This infamy of princes! ſends a ruffian,
By his own hand and ſeal commiſſion'd, ſends him,

To

To treat of peace: and, as I read his letters,
The villain ſtabs me—This, if this wants light,
There is no certainty in human reaſon;
If this not ſhines with all-convincing truth,
Yon ſun is dark—And yet theſe cowards come
With lying ſhifts, and low eluſive arts—
O it inflames my anger into madneſs!
This added inſult on our underſtanding,
This treacherous attempt to ſteal away,
The only joy and treaſure of my life,
Sweet ſacred vengeance for my murder'd princeſs.

Sel. The curſed wretch who did aſſail thy life,
O king of *England*, was indeed an envoy
Sent by the prince of *Jaffa*: This we own.
But then he was an execrable bigot,
Who, for ſuch horrid purpoſes, had crept
Into the cheated Sultan's court and ſervice,
As by the traitor's papers we have learn'd.
For know, there lives, upon the craggy cliffs
Of wild *Phenician* mountains, a dire race,
A nation of aſſaſſins. Dreadful zeal,
Fierce and intolerant of all religion
That differs from their own, is the black ſoul
Of that infernal ſtate. Soon as their chief,
The old man (ſo they ſtile him) of the mountains,
Gives out his baleful will, however fell,
However wicked and abhorr'd it be,
Tho' cloth'd in danger, the moſt cruel death,
They, ſwift and ſilent, glide thro' every land,
As fly the gloomy miniſters of vengeance,
Famine and plague; they lye for years conceal'd,
Make light of oaths, nay, ſometimes change religion,
And never fail to execute his orders.
Of theſe the villain was, theſe ruffian ſaints,

The curſe of earth, the terror of mankind:
And thy engagement, prince, in this cruſado,
That was the reaſon whence they ſought thy life.
Edw. Falſe, falſe as hell! the lye of guilty fear!
You all are bigots, robbers, ruffians all!
It is the very genius of your nation.
Vindictive rage, the thirſt of blood conſumes you:
You live by rapine, thence your empire roſe;
And your religion is a mere pretence
To rob and murder in the name of heaven.
Sel. Be patient, prince, be more humane and juſt.
You have your virtues, have your vices too;
And we have ours. The liberal hand of nature
Has not created us, nor any nation,
Beneath the bleſſed canopy of heaven,
Of ſuch malignant clay, but each may boaſt
Their native virtues, and their Maker's bounty.
You call us bigots.—O! canſt thou with that
Reproach us, Chriſtian prince? What brought thee hither?
What elſe but bigotry? What doſt thou here?
What elſe but perſecute?—The truth is great,
Greater than thou, and I will give it way;
Even thou thyſelf, in all thy rage, wilt hear it—
From their remoteſt ſource, theſe holy wars,
What have they breath'd but bigotry and rapine?
Did not the firſt *Cruſaders*, when their zeal
Should have ſhone out the pureſt, did they not,
Led by the frantic hermit who began
The murderous trade, thro' their own countries ſpread
The woes their vice could not reſerve for ours?
Tho' this exceeds the purport of my meſſage;
Yet muſt I, thus inſulted in my country,
Inſulted in religion, bid thee think,

O king

O king of *England*, on the different conduct
Of *Saracens* and *Chriſtians*, when beneath
Your pious *Godfrey*, in the firſt cruſado,
Jeruſalem was ſack'd, and when beneath
Our generous *Saladin* it was retaken—
O hideous ſcene! my ſoul within me ſhrinks,
Abhorrent, from the view!—twelve thouſand wretches,
Receiv'd to mercy, void of all defence,
Truſting to plighted faith, to purchas'd ſafety,
Behold theſe naked wretches, in cold blood,
Men, women, children, murder'd, baſely murder'd!
The holy temple, which you came to reſcue,
Regorges with the barbarous profanation.
The ſtreets run diſmal torrents. Drown'd in blood
The very ſoldier ſickens at his carnage.
Couldſt thou, O ſun, behold the blaſting ſight,
And lift again thy ſacred eye on mortals?
A ruthleſs race! Who can do this, can do it,
To pleaſe the general Father of mankind!
While nobler *Saladin*———

Edw. Away! be gone!
With thee, vile derviſe, what have I to do?
I loſe my hour of vengeance, I debaſe me,
To hold this talk with thee.

Sel. While truth and reaſon
Speak from my tongue, vile derviſe as I am,
Yet am I greater than the higheſt monarch,
Who, from blind fury, grows the ſlave of paſſion.
Beſides, I come to juſtify a prince,
Howe'er in other qualities below thee,
In love of goodneſs, truth, humanity,
And honour, Sir, thy equal;—yes, thy equal!—

Edw. What? how? compare me with a damn'd aſſaſſin?

A matchleſs villain!—Ha! preſumptuous derviſe!
Thou gnaw'ſt thy quivering lip—A ſmother'd paſſion
Shakes thro' thy frame.—What villainy is that
Thou dareſt not utter?—Wert thou not a wretch,
Protected by thy habit, this right hand
Should cruſh thee into atoms—Hence! away!
Go tell thy maſter that I hold him baſe,
Beyond the power of words to ſpeak his baſeneſs!
A coward! an aſſaſſinating coward!
And when I once have dragg'd him from his city,
Which I will ſtraitway do—I then will make him,
In all the gall and bitterneſs of guilt,
Grinding the vengeful ſteel betwixt his teeth,
Will make the traitor own it.

Sel. [*diſcovering himſelf.*] Never!

Edw. Ha!

Sel. Thou canſt not, haughty monarch!—I am he!
I am this *Selim!* this inſulted *Selim!*
Yet clear as day, and will confound thy paſſion.

Edw. Thou *Selim!*

Sel. I.

Edw. Was ever guilt ſo bold?

Sel. Did ever innocence deſcend to fear?

Edw. This bears ſome ſhew of honour. Wilt thou then,
Decide it by the ſword?

Sel. I will do more———

Edw. How more?

Sel. Decide it by ſuperior reaſon.

Edw. No weak evaſions!———

Sel. If I not convince thee,
If by thyſelf I am not of this crime
Acquitted, then I grant thee thy demand.
Nay more, yon yielded city ſhall be thine:

For

For know, hot prince, I ſhould diſdain a throne,
I could not fill with honour. Were I guilty,
I ſhould not tremble at thy threatning voice;
No, 'tis myſelf I fear.

Edw. What ſhall I think?

Sel. Hear but one witneſs, and I aſk no more,
To clear my name. The witneſs is a woman.
Her looks are truth; fair uncorrupted faith
Beams from her eyes. Thou ne'er canſt doubt ſuch beauty;
For 'tis th' expreſſion of a ſpotleſs ſoul.

Edw. Curſe on thy mean luxurious eaſtern arts
Of cowardice! Thou would'ſt ſeduce my vengeance—
But I deteſt all beauty—Barbarous Sultan!
Ah! thou haſt murder'd beauty! thy fell crime—
Haſte, *Gloſter*, haſte—in ſight of camp and city,
Prepare the liſts—Now ſhow thyſelf a prince,
Or die in ſhameful tortures like a ſlave.

Sel. I come not hither or to dread thy wrath,
Or court thy mercy.

Gloſt. Sir, you cannot juſtly
Refuſe him his demand. The fervent ſoul
Of undiſſembled innocence, methinks,
Is felt in what he ſays. Firſt hear this perſon;
And if ſhe gives not full conviction, then,
Have then recourſe to what ſhould always be
The laſt appeal of reaſonable beings,
Brute force.

Edw. Well then, conduct her hither, Sultan—

[Selim *goes out.*]

Ah! my diſorder'd mind! from thought to thought,
Uncertain, toſs'd, the wreck of ſtormy paſſion!
This rage a while ſupports me; but I feel
It will deſert me ſoon, and I again

Shall

Shall ſoon relapſe to miſery and weakneſs.
O *Eleonora!* little didſt thou think,
How deeply wretched thy dire gift of life
Would make me!

SCENE IV.

EDWARD, GLOSTER, THEALD; *to them* SELIM *conducting* ELEONORA, DARAXA.

Sel. Raiſe thy eyes, O king of *England*,
To the bright witneſs of my blameleſs honour.
Edw. No; beauty ſhall no more engage my eyes,
It ſhall no more profane the ſhrine devoted
To the ſweet image of my *Eleonora!*
Let her declare her knowledge in this matter.
Eleon. Will not my *Edward* bleſs me with a look?
Edw. What angel borrows *Eleonora*'s voice!—
O thou pale ſhade of her I weep for ever!
Permit me thus to worſhip thee—Thou art!
Amazing heaven!—Thou art my *Eleonora!*
My *Eleonora*'s ſelf; my dear, my true,
My living *Eleonora!*—What—to whom
Owe I this miracle? this better life?——
Oppreſſive joy!—owe I my *Eleonora?*
Eleon. To him, that generous prince, who put his life,
His honour on the deſperate riſque to ſave me,
When in the arms of death—Depriv'd of voice,
Of motion, and of ſenſe, benumb'd I lay,
My frighted train around me thought me dead,
And fill'd the tent with cries; my heart alone
Still feebly beat; but ſoon the poiſon's force
Had driven out life from that its laſt retreat;
If in the moment of approaching fate,
He, like my guardian angel, had not brought

An

An antidote of wond'rous power, by which
I am to light reſtor'd—to thee, my *Edward!*
Edw. Did he, did he preſerve thee! He, whom thus
I have with ſuch inhuman pride inſulted!
O blind, O brutiſh, O injurious rage!
They, they are wiſe, who, when they feel thy madneſs,
Seal up their lips. And canſt thou then forgive me,
Thou who haſt o'er me gain'd that nobleſt triumph,
The triumph of humanity?—Thou canſt.
'Tis eaſier for the generous to forgive
Than for offence to aſk it.
Sel. Uſe not, prince,
So harſh a word. More than forgive, I love
Thy noble heat, thy beautiful diſorder.
O! I am too much man, I feel, myſelf,
Too much the charming force of human paſſions,
E'er to pretend, with ſupercilious brow,
With proud affected virtue, to diſdain them.
Edw. How? generous Sultan, how ſhall I requite thee?
Here—Take thy lov'd *Daraxa*, whom I meant
To have reſtor'd, when this misfortune happen'd;
But ſecret-working Heaven ordain'd her ſtay,
To ſave us all.
Sel. Wert thou the lord of earth,
Thou could'ſt not give me more!—my dear *Daraxa!*
Edw. Hence to the camp, my *Gloſter*——Bid the ſoldiers
Forſake the trenches—Let unbounded joy
Reign, fearleſs, o'er the mingled camp and city—
Go, tell my faithful ſoldiers, that their queen
My *Eleonora* lives! A prize beyond
The chance of war to give! She lives to ſoften
My too imperious temper, and to make them,

To

To make my people happy!—O my ſoul!
What love e'er equall'd thine? O deareſt! beſt!
Pride of thy ſex! inimitable goodneſs!
Whenever woman henceforth ſhall be prais'd
For conjugal affection, men will ſay,
" There ſhine the virtues of an *Eleonora!*"
Tranſporting bliſs!—How bountiful is heaven!
Depreſſing often, but to raiſe us more,
Let never thoſe deſpair who follow virtue.
Love—gratitude—divide me—Once more, Sultan,
Forgive me, pardon my miſtaken zeal,
That left my country, croſs'd the ſtormy ſeas,
To war with thee, brave prince, to war with honour.
Now that my paſſions give me leave to think;
The hand of heaven appears in what I ſuffer'd,
My erring zeal has ſuffer'd by a zealot.
Sel. It does, O king. And, venerable Chriſtian,
I know thy moderation will excuſe me.
But ſince by ruling Wiſdom (who unweigh'd,
Unmeant, does nought) men are ſo various made,
So various turn'd, that in opinions, they
Muſt blindly think, or take a different way;
In ſpite of force, ſince judgment will be free;
Then let us in this righteous mean agree,
Let holy rage, let perſecution ceaſe;
Let the head argue, but the heart be peace;
Let all mankind in love of what is right,
In virtue and humanity unite.

END *of the* FIFTH ACT.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by a FRIEND.

THESE Poets are ſuch fools!—The man behind,
Who wrote this play—a ſimple ſoul, I find,—
Believes with all his heart, there was a wife,
Who needs would die—to ſave a huſband's life!
He in the printed chronicles has read it:
And true it is—Sir Richard Baker *ſaid it.*
Why, what an aſs theſe books do make a man?
Read nature—then believe it—you who can.
Look round this town—the queſtion is not—whether
Spouſe dies *for ſpouſe: but, who will* live *together:*
Of old, they ſay, a huſband was a lover:
But, thank our ſtars! thoſe fooliſh days are over:
To ſuch ſubſtantial prudence are we come,
We wed not heart to heart—but, plumb to plumb.
What ſenſe? what beauty? are not now the things:
But, can he *ſettle*—up *to what* ſhe *brings?*
Yet in this eaſy, all-forgiving age,
Bear with ſuch moral foileries—on the ſtage.
Perhaps too, there may be ſome gentle ſoul,
Who rather likes to weep—than win a vole;
Who thinks that there are *charms in generous love,*
And would to Edward, Eleonora *prove.*

TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA.

A

TRAGEDY.

TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS,

FREDERICK

PRINCE of WALES.

SIR,

THE honour your ROYAL HIGHNESS has done me in the protection you was pleaſed to give to this tragedy, emboldens me to lay it now at your feet, and beg your permiſſion to publiſh it under your royal patronage. The favouring and protecting of letters has been, in all ages and countries, one diſtinguiſhing mark of a great prince;

prince; and that with good reaſon, not only as it ſhews a juſtneſs of taſte, and elevation of mind, but as the influence of ſuch a protection, by exciting good writers to labour with more emulation in the improvement of their ſeveral talents, not a little contributes to the embelliſhment and inſtruction of ſociety. But of all the different ſpecies of writing, none has ſuch an effect upon the lives and manners of men as the dramatic; and therefore that of all others moſt deſerves the attention of princes, who, by a judicious approbation of ſuch pieces as tend to promote all public and private virtue, may more than by any coercive methods ſecure the purity of the ſtage, and in conſequence thereof greatly advance the morals and politeneſs of their people. How eminently YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS has always extended your favour and patronage to every art and ſcience, and in a particular manner to dramatic performances, is too well known to the world for me to mention it here. Allow me only to wiſh, that what I have now the honour to offer to your ROYAL HIGHNESS, may be judged

judged not unworthy of your protection, at leaſt in the Sentiments which it inculcates. A warm and grateful ſenſe of your goodneſs to me makes me deſirous to ſeize every occaſion of declaring in public, with what profound reſpect and dutiful attachment,

I am,

SIR,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Moſt obliged,

Moſt obedient, and

Moſt devoted ſervant,

JAMES THOMSON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS play is conſiderably ſhortened in the performance; but I hope it will not be diſagreeable to the reader to ſee it as it was at firſt written; there being a great difference betwixt a play in the cloſet, and upon the ſtage.

PROLOGUE.

BOLD is the man! who, in this nicer age,
Preſumes to tread the chaſte corrected ſtage.
Now, with gay tinſel arts, we can no more
Conceal the want of nature's ſterling ore.
Our ſpells are vaniſh'd, broke our magic wand,
That us'd to waft you over ſea and land.
Before your light *the fairy people fade,*
The demons fly—The ghoſt itſelf is laid.
In vain of martial ſcenes the loud alarms,
The mighty prompter thundering out to arms,
The play-houſe poſſe clattering from afar,
The cloſe-wedg'd battle, and the din of war.
Now even the ſenate ſeldom we convene;
The yawning fathers nod behind the ſcene.
Your taſte rejects the glittering falſe ſublime,
To ſigh in metaphor, and die in rhime.
High rant *is tumbled from his gallery throne:*
Deſcription, dreams---nay, ſimilies are gone.
What ſhall we then? to pleaſe you how deviſe,
Whoſe judgment ſits not in your ears and eyes?
Thrice happy! could we catch great Shakeſpear's *art,*
To trace the deep receſſes of the heart;
His ſimple plain ſublime, to which is given
To ſtrike the ſoul with darted flames from heaven:
Could we awake ſoft Otway's *tender woe,*
The pomp of verſe and golden lines of Rowe.
We to your hearts apply: let them attend;
Before their ſilent candid bar we bend.
If warm'd they liſten, 'tis our nobleſt praiſe;
If cold, they wither all the muſe's bays.

The

The PERSONS.

TANCRED, Count of *Lecce*.	Mr. Garrick.
MATTEO SIFFREDI, lord high chancellor of *Sicily*,	Mr. Sheridan.
Earl OSMOND, lord high conſtable of *Sicily*,	Mr. Delane.
RODOLPHO, friend to TANCRED, and captain of the guards,	Mr. Havard.
SIGISMUNDA, daughter of SIFFREDI,	Mrs. Cibber.
LAURA, ſiſter of RODOLPHO, and friend to SIGISMUNDA,	Miſs Budgel.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE *The City of* Palermo, *in* Sicily.

TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sigiſ. AH fatal day to *Sicily!* The king
Approaches his laſt moments?
Laur. So 'tis fear'd.
Sigiſ. The death of thoſe diſtinguiſh'd by their ſtation,
But by their virtues more, awakes the mind
To ſolemn dread, and ſtrikes a ſaddening awe:
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourſelves,
Left to the toil of life—And yet the beſt
Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.
Laura, 'tis ſaid—the heart is ſometimes charg'd
With a prophetic ſadneſs: ſuch, methinks,
Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death
Suggeſts a thouſand fears. What troubles thence
May throw the ſtate once more into confuſion,
What ſudden changes in my father's houſe
May riſe, and part me from my deareſt *Tancred*,
Alarms my thought.

Laur. The fears of love-ſick fancy!
Perverſely buſy to torment itſelf.
But be aſſur'd your father's ſteady friendſhip,
Join'd to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune, will ſupport and cheriſh,
Here in the public eye of *Sicily*,
This—I may call him—his adopted ſon,
The noble *Tancred*, form'd to all his virtues.

Sigiſ. Ah form'd to charm his daughter!—This fair morn
Has tempted far the chace. Is he not yet
Return'd?

Laur. No.——When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lyes, was call'd in haſte,
He ſent each way his meſſengers to find him;
With ſuch a look of ardor and impatience,
As if this near event was to count *Tancred*
Of more importance than I comprehend.

Sigiſ. There lyes, my *Laura*, o'er my *Tancred's* birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accoſt,
Nay, with reſpect, which oft I have obſerv'd,
Stealing at times ſubmiſſive o'er his features,
In *Belmont*'s woods my father rear'd this youth—
Ah woods! where firſt my artleſs boſom learn'd
The ſighs of love.—He gives him out the ſon
Of an old friend, a baron of *Apulia*,
Who in the late cruſado bravely fell.
But then 'tis ſtrange; is all his family,
As well as father, dead? and all their friends,
Except my ſire, the generous good *Siffredi?*
Had he a mother, ſiſter, brother left,
The laſt remain of kindred; with what pride,
What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and ſea,

To

To claim this riſing honour of their blood!
This bright unknown! this all-accompliſh'd youth!
Who charms—too much—the heart of *Sigiſmunda!*
Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
The friend and partner of his freeſt hours.
What ſays *Rodolpho?* Does he truly credit
This ſtory of his birth?
Laur. He has ſometimes,
Like you, his doubts; yet, when maturely weigh'd,
Believes it true. As for lord *Tancred*'s ſelf,
He never entertain'd the ſlighteſt thought
That verg'd to doubt; but oft laments his ſtate,
By cruel fortune ſo ill pair'd to yours.
Sigiſ. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
Beggars all wealth—Then to your brother, *Laura*,
He talks of me?
Laur. Of nothing elſe. Howe'er
The talk begin, it ends with *Sigiſmunda.*
Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks
Are full of you; and all the woods of *Belmont*
Enamour'd with your name—
Sigiſ. Away, my friend;
You flatter—yet the dear deluſion charms.
Laur. No, *Sigiſmunda*, 'tis the ſtricteſt truth,
Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondneſs,
My brother talks for ever of the paſſion
That fires young *Tancred*'s breaſt. So much it ſtrikes him,
He praiſes love as if he were a lover.
He blames the falſe purſuits of vagrant youth,
Calls them gay folly, a miſtaken ſtruggle
Againſt beſt-judging nature. Heaven, he ſays,
In laviſh bounty form'd the heart for love;
In love included all the finer ſeeds

Of honour, virtue, friendſhip, pureſt bliſs——
Sigiſ. Virtuous *Rodolpho!*
Laur. Then his pleaſing theme
He varies to the praiſes of your lover—
Sigiſ. And what, my *Laura*, ſays he on the ſubject?
Laur. He ſays that, tho' he were not nobly born,
Nature has form'd him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly ſcorning
Whatever bears the ſmalleſt taint of baſeneſs.
That every eaſy virtue is his own;
Not learnt by painful labour, but inſpir'd,
Implanted in his ſoul—Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character obſerves;
That though his paſſions burn with high impatience,
And ſometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off; yet the leaſt check
Of ruling reaſon brings them back to temper,
And gentle ſoftneſs.
Sigiſ. True! O true, *Rodolpho!*
Bleſt be thy kindred worth for loving his!
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardor! temper'd ſoft
With gentleneſs of heart, and manly reaſon!
If virtue were to wear a human form,
To light it with her dignity and flame,
Then ſoftning mix her ſmiles and tender graces;
O ſhe would chuſe the perſon of my *Tancred!*
Go on, my friend, go on, and ever praiſe him;
The ſubject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
While my breaſt trembles to that ſweeteſt muſic!
The heart of woman taſtes no truer joy,
Is never flatter'd with ſuch dear inchantment—
'Tis more than ſelfiſh vanity—as when
She hears the praiſes of the man ſhe loves——
Laur. Madam, your father comes.

SCENE

SCENE II.

SIFFREDI, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Siff. [*To an attendant as he enters.*] Lord *Tancred* then
Is found?
Att. My lord, he quickly will be here.
I ſcarce could keep before him, tho' he bid me
Speed on, to ſay he would attend your orders.
Siff. 'Tis well—retire—You, too, my daughter, leave me.
Sigiſ. I go, my father—But how fares the king?
Siff. He is no more. Gone to that awful ſtate,
Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.
Sigiſ. How bright muſt then be his!—This ſtroke is ſudden.
He was this morning well, when to the chace
Lord *Tancred* went.
Siff. 'Tis true. But at his years
Death gives ſhort notice—Drooping nature then,
Without a guſt of pain to ſhake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain. The duties of his day
Were all diſcharg'd, and gratefully enjoy'd
Its nobleſt bleſſings; calm, as evening ſkies,
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open heaven; when, for his laſt long ſleep
Timely prepar'd, a laſſitude of life,
A pleaſing wearineſs of mortal joy,
Fell on his ſoul, and down he ſunk to reſt.
O may my death be ſuch!—He but one wiſh
Left unfulfill'd, which was to ſee count *Tancred*——

Sigiſ. To ſee. count *Tancred!*—Pardon me, my lord—

Siff. For what, my daughter?——But, with ſuch emotion,
Why did you ſtart at mention of count *Tancred?*

Sigiſ. Nothing—I only hoped the dying king
Might mean to make ſome generous juſt proviſion
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Siff. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—
I want ſome private conference with lord *Tancred.*

SCENE III.

SIFFREDI *alone.*

My doubts are but too true—If theſe old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual paſſion
Has ſeiz'd, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My ſovereign now—Should it be ſo? Ah there,
There lurks a brooding tempeſt, that may ſhake
My long concerted ſcheme, to ſettle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent baſis of his will———
Away! unworthy views! you ſhall not tempt me!
Nor intereſt, nor ambition ſhall ſeduce
My fixt reſolve——periſh the ſelfiſh thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!—
He comes—my king—unconſcious of his fortune.

SCENE IV.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI.

Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*, in your looks I read,
Confirm'd, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue—We then, at laſt, have loſt

The

The good old king?

Siff. Yes, we have loſt a father!
The greateſt bleſſing heaven beſtows on mortals,
And ſeldom found amidſt theſe wilds of time.
A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my *Tancred*,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deſerv'd that beſt, that glorious title.
'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.
He lov'd his people, deem'd them all his children;
The good exalted, and depreſs'd the bad.
He ſpurn'd the flattering crew, with ſcorn rejected
Their ſmooth advice that only means themſelves,
Their ſchemes to aggrandize him into baſeneſs:
Nor did he leſs diſdain the ſecret breath,
The whiſper'd tale, that blights a virtuous name.
He ſought alone the good of thoſe for whom
He was entruſted with the ſovereign power:
Well knowing that a people, in their rights
And induſtry protected, living ſafe
Beneath the ſacred ſhelter of the laws,
Encourag'd in their genius, arts, and labours,
And happy each as he himſelf deſerves,
Are ne'er ungrateful. With unſparing hand
They will for him provide: their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treaſure,
And every honeſt man his faithful guard.

Tanc. A general face of grief o'erſpreads the city.
I mark'd the people, as I hither came,
In crouds aſſembled, ſtruck with ſilent ſorrow,
And pouring forth the nobleſt praiſe of tears.
Thoſe, whom remembrance of their former woes,
And long experience of the vain illuſions
Of youthful hope, had into wiſe conſent
And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,

And often caſting up their eyes to heaven,
Gave ſign of ſad conjecture. Others ſhew'd,
Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
A gleam of expectation, from what chance
And change might bring. A mingled murmur run
Along the ſtreets; and, from the lonely court
Of him who can no more aſſiſt their fortunes,
I ſaw the courtier-fry, with eager haſte,
All hurrying to *Conſtantia.*

Siff. Noble youth!
I joy to hear from thee theſe juſt reflections,
Worthy of riper years—But if they ſeek
Conſtantia, truſt me, they miſtake their courſe.

Tanc How! Is ſhe not, my lord, the late king's ſiſter,
Heir to the crown of *Sicily?* the laſt
Of our fam'd *Norman* line, and now our queen?

Stiff. Tancred, 'tis true; ſhe is the late king's ſiſter,
The ſole ſurviving offspring of that tyrant
William the bad—ſo for his vices ſtiled;
Who ſpilt much noble blood, and ſore oppreſs'd
Th' exhauſted land: whence grievous war aroſe,
And many a dire convulſion ſhook the ſtate.
When he, whoſe death *Sicilia* mourns to-day,
William, who has and well deſerv'd the name
Of *Good*, ſucceeding to his father's throne,
Reliev'd his country's woes—But to return—
She is the late king's ſiſter, born ſome months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.

Tanc. You much ſurpriſe me—May I then preſume
To aſk who is?

Siff. Come nearer, noble *Tancred*,
Son of my care! I muſt, on this occaſion,
Conſult thy generous heart; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honeſt virtues,

Gives

Gives better counſel than the hoary head—
Then know, there lives a prince, here in *Palermo*,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the firſt.

Tanc. Great heaven!—How far remov'd
From that our mighty founder?

Siff. His great grandſon:
Sprung from his eldeſt ſon, who died untimely,
Before his father.

Tanc. Ha! the prince you mean
Is he not *Manfred*'s ſon? The generous, brave,
Unhappy *Manfred!* whom the tyrant *William*,
You juſt now mention'd, not content to ſpoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamouſly murder'd.

Siff. Yes—the ſame.

Tanc. By heavens! I joy to find our *Norman* reign,
The world's ſole light amidſt theſe barbarous ages!
Yet rears its head; and ſhall not, from the lance,
Paſs to the feeble diſtaff—But this prince
Where has he lain conceal'd?

Siff. The late good king,
By noble pity mov'd, contriv'd to ſave him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage;
And had him rear'd in private, as became
His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture.
Till now, too young to rule a troubled ſtate,
By civil broils moſt miſerably torn,
He in his ſafe retreat has lain conceal'd,
His birth and fortune to himſelf unknown;
But when the dying king to me entruſted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His ſucceſſor he named him.

Tanc. Happy youth!

He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty *Oſmond*, and the tyrant's daughter.
Siff. Ay, that is what I dread—that heat of youth;
There lurks, I fear, perdition to the ſtate;
I dread the horrors of rekindled war:
Tho' dead, the tyrant ſtill is to be fear'd;
His daughter's party ſtill is ſtrong, and numerous:
Her friend, earl *Oſmond*, conſtable of *Sicily*,
Experienc'd, brave, high-born, of mighty intereſt.
Better the prince and princeſs ſhould by marriage
Unite their friends, their intereſt and their claims;
Then will the peace and welfare of the land
On a firm baſis riſe.
Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*,
If by myſelf I of this prince may judge,
That ſcheme will ſcarce ſucceed—Your prudent age
In vain will counſel, if the heart forbid it—
But wherefore fear? The right is clearly his;
And, under your direction, with each man
Of worth, and ſtedfaſt loyalty, to back
At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
Againſt th' attoniſh'd ſons of violence,
Who fight with awful juſtice on their ſide.
All *Sicily* will rouſe, all faithful hearts
Will range themſelves around prince *Manfred*'s ſon.
For me, I here devote me to the ſervice
Of this young prince; I every drop of blood
Will loſe with joy, with tranſport in his cauſe—
Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
To this deciſion come—Then find the prince;
Loſe not a moment to awaken in him
The royal ſoul. Perhaps he now deſponding
Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune;

That

That in the narrower bounds of private life
He muſt confine his aims, thoſe ſwelling virtues
Which from his noble father he inherits.
Siff. Perhaps, regardleſs, in the common bane
Of youth he melts in vanity and love.
But if the ſeeds of virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher ſenſe, a love
That graſps the loves and happineſs of millions.
Tanc. Why that ſurmiſe? Or ſhould he love, *Siffredi*,
I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raiſe
And animate his virtues—O permit me,
To plead the cauſe of youth—Their virtue oft,
In pleaſure's ſoft inchantment lull'd a while,
Forgets itſelf; it ſleeps and gayly dreams,
Till great occaſion rouſe it: then all flame,
It walks abroad, with heighten'd ſoul and vigor,
And by the change aſtoniſhes the world.
Even with a kind of ſympathy, I feel
The joy that waits this prince; when all the powers,
Th' expanding heart can wiſh, of doing good;
Whatever ſwells ambition, or exalts
The human ſoul into divine emotions,
All croud at once upon him.
Siff. Ah, my *Tancred*,
Nothing ſo eaſy as in ſpeculation,
And at a diſtance ſeen the courſe of honour,
A fair delightful champain ſtrew'd with flowers.
But when the practice comes; when our fond paſſions,
Pleaſure, and pride, and ſelf-indulgence, throw
Their magic duſt around, the proſpect roughens:
Then dreadful paſſes, craggy mountains riſe,
Cliffs to be ſcal'd, and torrents to be ſtem'd:
Then toil enſues, and perſeverance ſtern;

And

And endleſs combats with our groſſer ſenſe,
Oft loſt, and oft renew'd; and generous pain
For others felt; and, harder leſſon ſtill!
Our honeſt bliſs for others ſacrific'd;
And all the rugged taſk of virtue quails
The ſtouteſt heart of common reſolution.
Few get above this turbid ſcene of ſtrife,
Few gain the ſummit, breathe that pureſt air,
That heavenly æther, which untroubled ſees
The ſtorm of vice and paſſion rage below.

Tanc. Moſt true, my lord. But why thus augure ill?
You ſeem to doubt this prince. I know him not.
Yet oh, methinks, my heart could anſwer for him!
The juncture is ſo high, ſo ſtrong the gale
That blows from heaven, as thro' the deadeſt ſoul
Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.

Siff. Hear him, immortal ſhades of his great fathers!—
Forgive me, Sir, this trial of your heart:
Thou! thou art he!

Tanc. Siffredi!

Siff. Tancred, thou!
Thou art the man, of all the many thouſands
That toil upon the boſom of this iſle,
By heaven elected to command the reſt,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy!

Tanc. Manfred my father! I the laſt ſupport
Of the famed *Norman* line, that awes the world!
I! who this morning wander'd forth an orphan,
Outcaſt of all but thee, my ſecond father!
Thus call'd to glory! to the firſt great lot
Of human kind!—O wonder-working Hand
That, in majeſtic ſilence, ſways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature;

O grant

O grant me, Heaven! the virtues to ſuſtain
This awful burden of ſo many heroes!
Let me not be exalted into ſhame,
Set up the worthleſs pageant of vain grandeur.
Mean-time I thank the juſtice of the king,
Who has my right bequeath'd me. Thee, *Siffredi*,
I thank thee—O I ne'er enough can thank thee!
Yes, thou haſt been—thou art—ſhalt be my father!
Thou ſhalt direct my unexperienc'd years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.
Siff. It is enough for me—to ſee my ſovereign
Aſſert his virtues, and maintain his honour.
Tanc. I think, my lord, you ſaid the king committed
To you his will. I hope it is not clogg'd
With any baſe conditions, any clauſe,
To tyrannize my heart, and to *Conſtantia*
Enſlave my hand devoted to another.
The hint you juſt now gave of that alliance,
You muſt imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
In this alone I will not bear diſpute,
Not even from thee, *Siffredi!*—Let the council
Be ſtrait aſſembled, and the will there open'd:
Thence iſſue ſpeedy orders to convene,
This day ere noon, the ſenate: where thoſe barons,
Who now are in *Palermo*, will attend
To pay their ready homage to the king,
Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.
Siff. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
To tell you——Now, now, is the trying criſis,
That muſt determine of your future reign.
O with heroic rigor watch your heart!
And to the ſovereign duties of a king,
Th' unequal'd pleaſures of a God on earth,

Submit

Submit the common joys, the common paſſions,
Nay, even the virtues of the private man.

Tanc. Of that no more. They not oppoſe, but aid,
Invigorate, cheriſh, and reward each other.
The kind all-ruling Wiſdom is no tyrant.

SCENE V.

TANCRED *alone.*

Now, generous *Sigiſmunda*, comes my turn
To ſhew my love was not of thine unworthy,
When fortune bade me bluſh to look to thee.
But what is fortune to the wiſh of love?
A miſerable bankrupt! O 'tis poor,
'Tis ſcanty all, whate'er we can beſtow:
The wealth of kings is wretchedneſs and want!—
Quick let me find her! taſte that higheſt joy,
Th' exalted heart can know, the mixt effuſion
Of gratitude and love!—Behold, ſhe comes!

SCENE VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. My fluttering ſoul was all on wing to find thee
My love! my *Sigiſmunda!*

Sigiſ. O my *Tancred!*
Tell me, what means this myſtery and gloom
That low'rs around. Juſt now involv'd in thought
Thy father ſhot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem ſtrangely mov'd—I fear ſome dark event
From the king's death to trouble our repoſe,
That tender calm we in the woods of *Belmont*
So happily enjoy'd——Explain this hurry,
What means it? Say.

Tanc.

Tanc. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our moſt romantic wiſhes, happy!
Sigiſ. You but perplex me more.
Tanc. It means, my faireſt!
That thou art queen of *Sicily*; and I
The happieſt of mankind! than monarch more!
Becauſe with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant *William*'s rage,
Famed *Roger*'s lineal iſſue, was my father. [*Pauſing.*
You droop, my love; dejected on a ſudden;
You ſeem to mourn my fortune—The ſoft tear
Springs in thy eye—O let me kiſs it off—
Why this, my *Sigiſmunda?*
Sigiſ. Royal *Tancred*,
None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice;—yet me alone, of all *Sicilians*,
It makes unhappy.
Tanc. I ſhould hate it then!
Should throw, with ſcorn, the ſplendid ruin from me!—
No, *Sigiſmunda*, 'tis my hope with thee
To ſhare it, whence it draws its richeſt value.
Sigiſ. You are my ſovereign—I at humble diſtance—
Tanc. Thou art my queen! the ſovereign of my ſoul!
You never reign'd with ſuch triumphant luſtre,
Such winning charms as now; yet, thou art ſtill
The dear, the tender, generous *Sigiſmunda!*
Who, with a heart exalted far above
Thoſe ſelfiſh views, that charm the common breaſt,
Stoop'd from the height of life, and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I ſeem'd of fortune
The hopeleſs outcaſt, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me but thy father.
And would'ſt thou claim all goodneſs to thyſelf!
Can'ſt thou thy *Tancred* deem ſo dully form'd,

Of

Of ſuch groſs clay, juſt as I reach the point—
A point my wildeſt hopes could never image——
In that great moment, full of every virtue,
That I ſhould then ſo mean a traitor prove
To the beſt bliſs and honour of mankind,
So much diſgrace the human heart, as then,
For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
The faithleſs joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
The cordial ſweets of friendſhip and of love,
The life of life! my all, my *Sigiſmunda!*
I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
Cruel, unjuſt, an outrage to my heart,
Did they not ſpring from love.

Sigiſ. Think not, my lord,
That to ſuch vulgar doubts I can deſcend.
Your heart, I know, diſdains the little thought
Of changing with the vain external change
Of circumſtance and fortune. Rather thence
It would, with riſing ardor, greatly feel
A noble pride to ſhew itſelf the ſame.
But, ah! the hearts of kings are not their own.
There is a haughty duty that ſubjects them
To chains of ſtate, to wed the public welfare,
And not indulge the tender private virtues.
Some high-deſcended princeſs, who will bring
New power and intereſt to your throne, demands
Your royal hand—perhaps *Conſtantia.*—

Tanc. She!
O name her not! Were I this moment free,
And diſengag'd as he who never felt
The powerful eye of beauty, never ſigh'd
For matchleſs worth like thine, I ſhould abhor
All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
Moſt baſely murder'd mine; and ſhe his daughter,

Supported

Supported by his barbarous party, ſtill
His pride inherits, his imperious ſpirit
And inſolent pretenſions to my throne.
And canſt thou deem me then ſo poorly tame,
So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
As from the prudent cowardice of ſtate
E'er to ſubmit to ſuch a baſe propoſal?
Deteſted thought! O doubly, doubly hateful!
From the two ſtrongeſt paſſions; from averſion
To this *Conſtantia*—and from love to thee.
Cuſtom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
O'er ſervile man extends her blind dominion:
The pride of kings enſlaves them; their ambition,
Or intereſt, lords it o'er the better paſſions.
But vain their talk, maſk'd under ſpecious words
Of ſtation, duty, and of public good:
They whom juſt Heaven has to a throne exalted,
To guard the rights and liberties of others,
What duty binds them to betray their own?
For me, my free-born heart ſhall bear no dictates,
But thoſe of truth and honour; wear no chains,
But the dear chains of love and *Sigiſmunda!*
Or if indeed my choice muſt be directed
By views of public good, whom ſhall I chuſe
So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,
And beam ſweet mercy on a happy people,
As thee, my love? whom place upon my throne
But thee, deſcended from the good *Siffredi?*
'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.
Sigiſ. Ceaſe, ceaſe, to raiſe my hopes above my duty;
Charm me no more, my *Tancred!*—O that we
In thoſe bleſt woods, where firſt you won my ſoul,
Had paſs'd our gentle days; far from the toil

And pomp of courts! Such is the wiſh of love;
Of love, that, with delightful weakneſs, knows
No bliſs and no ambition but itſelf.
But in the world's full light, thoſe charming dreams,
Thoſe fond illuſions vaniſh. Awful duties,
The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
Where lurks a ſenſe your paſſion ſtifles now,
And proud imperious honour call you from me.
'Tis all in vain—You cannot huſh a voice
That murmurs here—I muſt not be perſuaded!

Tanc. [*kneeling.*] Hear me, thou ſoul of all my hopes and wiſhes!
And witneſs, heaven! prime ſource of love and joy!
Not a whole warring world combin'd againſt me;
Its pride, its ſplendor, its impoſing forms,
Nor intereſt, nor ambition, nor the face
Of ſolemn ſtate, not even thy father's wiſdom,
Shall ever ſhake my faith to *Sigiſmunda.*

[*Trumpets and acclamations heard.*]

But, hark! the public voice to duties call me,
Which with unweary'd zeal I will diſcharge;
And thou, yes thou, ſhalt be my bright reward—
Yet—ere I go—to huſh thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections———— [*writes his name.*]
Take this blank,
Sign'd with my name, and give it to thy father:
Tell him, 'tis my command, it be fill'd up
With a moſt ſtrict and ſolemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tye! how charming to my ſoul!
That more unites me to my *Sigiſmunda.*

For thee and for my people's good to live,
Is all the bliſs which ſovereign power can give.

END *of the* FIRST ACT.

ACT

ACT II. SCENE I.

SIFFREDI *alone.*

SO far 'tis well—The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counſel'd; that prince *Tancred*
Shall make *Conſtantia* partner of his throne.
O great! O wiſh'd event! whence the dire ſeeds
Of dark inteſtine broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miſeries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.
May theſe dim eyes, long blaſted by the rage
Of cruel faction and my country's woes,
Tir'd with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be clos'd in peace!
But how this mighty obſtacle ſurmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt? Love that diſturbs
The ſchemes of wiſdom ſtill; that, wing'd with paſſion,
Blind and impetuous in its fond purſuits,
Leaves the grey-headed reaſon far behind.
Alas! how frail the ſtate of human bliſs!
When even our honeſt paſſions oft deſtroy it.
I was to blame, in ſolitude and ſhades,
Infectious ſcenes! to truſt their youthful hearts.
Would I had mark'd the riſing flame! that now
Burns out with dangerous force—My daughter owns
Her paſſion for the king; ſhe trembling own'd it,
With prayers and tears and tender ſupplications,
That almoſt ſhook my firmneſs—And this blank,
Which his raſh fondneſs gave her, ſhews how much,
To what a wild extravagance he loves—
I ſee no means—it foils my deepeſt thought——
How to controul this madneſs of the king,

That

That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
Diſdain reſtraint, will from his generous heart
Borrow new rage, even ſpecioufly oppoſe
To reaſon, reaſon—But it muſt be done.
My own advice, of which I more and more
Approve, the ſtrict conditions of the will,
Highly demand his marriage with *Conſtantia*;
Or elſe her party has a fair pretence,——
And all, at once, is horror and confuſion—
How iſſue from this maze?—The crouding barons
Here ſummon'd to the palace, meet already,
To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
On a few moments hangs the public fate,
On a few haſty moments—Ha! there ſhone
A gleam of hope—Yes—with this very paper
I yet will ſave him—Neceſſary means
For good and noble ends can ne'er be wrong.
In that reſiſtleſs, that peculiar caſe,
Deceit is truth and virtue—But how bold
This lion in the toil?—O I will form it
Of ſuch a fatal thread, twiſt it ſo ſtrong
With all the ties of honour and of duty,
That his moſt deſperate fury ſhall not break
The honeſt ſnare—Here is the royal hand—
I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
And abſolute agreement to the will;
Which read before the nobles of the realm
Aſſembled, in the ſacred face of *Sicily*,
Conſtantia preſent, every heart and eye
Fix'd on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
He muſt ſubmit, his dream of love muſt vaniſh—
It ſhall be done!—To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
But ſafety to the public, to the king.
I will not reaſon more, I will not liſten

Even

Even to the voice of honour—No—'tis fix'd!
I here devote me for my prince and country;
Let them be ſafe, and let me nobly periſh!
Behold earl *Oſmond* comes; without whoſe aid
My ſchemes are all in vain.

SCENE II.

OSMOND, SIFFREDI.

Oſm. My lord *Siffredi*,
I from the council haſten'd to *Conſtantia*,
And have accompliſh'd what we there propos'd.
The princeſs to the will ſubmits her claims.
She with her preſence means to grace the ſenate,
And of your royal charge, young *Tancred*'s hand,
Accept. At firſt, indeed, it ſhock'd her hopes
Of reigning ſole, this new ſurpriſing ſcene
Of *Manfred*'s ſon, appointed by the king
With her joint-heir—But I ſo fully ſhew'd
The juſtice of the caſe, the public good
And ſure eſtabliſh'd peace which thence would riſe,
Join'd to the ſtrong neceſſity that urg'd her,
If on *Sicilia*'s throne ſhe meant to ſit,
As to the wiſe diſpoſal of the will
Her high ambition tamed. Methought, beſides,
I could diſcern that not from prudence merely
She to this choice ſubmitted
Siff. Noble *Oſmond*,
You have in this done to the public great
And ſignal ſervice. Yes, I muſt avow it;
This frank and ready inſtance of your zeal,
In ſuch a trying criſis of the ſtate,
When intereſt and ambition might have warp'd
Your views; I own, this truly generous virtue

Upbraids

Upbraids the raſhneſs of my former judgment.
Oſm. Siffredi, no—To you belongs the praiſe;
The glorious work is yours. Had I not ſeiz'd
Improv'd the wiſh'd occaſion to root out
Diviſion from the land, and ſave my country,
I had been baſe, been infamous for ever.
'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thouſands,
That by the barbarous ſword of civil war
Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; to you
The ſons of this fair iſle, from her firſt peers
Down to the ſwain who tills her golden plains,
Owe their ſafe homes, their ſoft domeſtic hours,
And thro' late time poſterity ſhall bleſs you,
You who advis'd this will—I bluſh to think,
I have ſo long oppos'd the beſt good man
In *Sicily*—With what impartial care
Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and paſſion,
Nor truſt too much the jaundic'd eye of party!
Henceforth its vain deluſions I renounce,
Its hot determinations, that confine
All merit and all virtue to itſelf.
To yours I join my hand; with you will own
No intereſt and no party but my country.
Nor is your friendſhip only my ambition:
There is a dearer name, the name of father,
By which I ſhould rejoice to call *Siffredi*.
Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
Unite my private happineſs.
Siff. My lord,
You have my glad conſent. To be allied
To your diſtinguiſh'd family, and merit,
I ſhall eſteem an honour, From my ſoul
I here embrace earl *Oſmond* as my friend,
And ſon.

Oſm. You

Osm. You make him happy. This aſſent,
So frank and warm, to what I long have wiſh'd,
Engages all my gratitude; at once,
In the firſt bloſſom, it matures our friendſhip.
I from this moment vow myſelf the friend,
And zealous ſervant of *Siffredi*'s houſe.

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

Off. [*to Siffredi.*] The king, my lord, demands your ſpeedy preſence.

Siff. I will attend him ſtrait—Farewell, my lord:
The ſenate meets; there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Osm. There, my noble lord,
We will compleat this ſalutary work,
Will there begin a new auſpicious aera.

SCENE III.

OSMOND *alone.*

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wiſhes——
But does ſhe give herſelf? Gay, young, and flatter'd.
Perhaps engag'd, will ſhe her youthful heart
Yield to my harſher, uncomplying years?
I am not form'd, by flattery and praiſe,
By ſighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity;
To charm at once and ſpoil her. Theſe ſoft arts
Nor ſuit my years nor temper; theſe be left
To boys and doating age. A prudent father,
By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,
Reſigns his daughter to a huſband's power,
Who with ſuperior dignity, with reaſon,
And manly tenderneſs, will ever love her;
Not firſt a kneeling ſlave, and then a tyrant.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

OSMOND, BARONS.

Osm. My lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day
Unites us all in amity and friendſhip,
We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
Not gloom'd by party, ſcowling on each other,
But all the children of one happy iſle,
The ſocial ſons of liberty. No pride,
No paſſion now, no thwarting views divide us:
Prince *Manfred*'s line, at laſt, to *William*'s joined,
Combines us in one family of brothers.
This to the late good king's well-order'd will,
And wiſe *Siffredi*'s generous care we owe.
I truly give you joy. Firſt of you all,
I here renounce thoſe errors and diviſions
That have ſo long diſturb'd our peace, and ſeem'd,
Fermenting ſtill, to threaten new commotions—
By time inſtructed let us not diſdain
To quit miſtakes. We all, my lords, have err'd.
Men may, I find, be honeſt, tho' they differ.

1 *Bar.* Who follows not, my lord, the fair example
You ſet us all, whate'er be his pretence,
Loves not with ſingle and unbiaſs'd heart
His country as he ought.

2 *Bar.* O beauteous peace!
Sweet union of a ſtate! What elſe, but thou,
Gives ſafety, ſtrength, and glory to a people!
I bow, lord conſtable, beneath the ſnow
Of many years; yet in my breaſt revives
A youthful flame. Methinks, I ſee again

Thoſe

Thoſe gentle days renew'd, that bleſs'd our iſle,
Ere by this waſteful fury of diviſion,
Worſe than our *Etna*'s moſt deſtructive fires,
It deſolated ſunk. I ſee our plains
Unbounded waving with the gifts of harveſt;
Our ſeas with commerce throng'd, our buſy ports
With chearful toil. Our *Enna* blooms afreſh;
Afreſh the ſweets of thymy *Hybla* flow.
Our nymphs and ſhepherds, ſporting in each vale,
Inſpire new ſong, and wake the paſtoral reed—
The tongue of age is found—Come, come, my ſons;
I long to ſee this prince, of whom the world
Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
The brave unhappy *Manfred*—Come, my lords;
We tarry here too long.

SCENE V.

TWO OFFICERS, *keeping off the croud.*

One of the croud.

Shew us our king,
The valiant *Manfred*'s ſon, who lov'd the people—
We muſt, we will behold him—Give us way.

1 *Off.* Pray, gentlemen, give back—it muſt not be—
Give back, I pray—on ſuch a glad occaſion
I would not ill intreat the loweſt of you.

2 MAN *of the croud.*

Nay, give us but a glimpſe of our young king.
We more than any baron of them all
Will pay him true allegiance.

2 *Off.* Friends—indeed—
You cannot paſs this way—We have ſtrict orders,

To keep for him himſelf, and for the barons,
All theſe apartments clear—Go to the gate
That fronts the ſea, you there will find admiſſion.
All. Long live king *Tancred! Manfred*'s ſon—
Huzza! [*Croud goes off.*]
1 *Off.* I do not marvel at their rage of joy:
He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my lord *Siffredi*'s houſe I liv'd,
Ere by his favour I obtain'd this office,
I there remember well the young count *Tancred.*
To ſee him and to love him were the ſame.
He was ſo noble in his ways, yet ſtill
So affable and mild. Well, well, old *Sicily,*
Yet happy days await thee!
2 *Off.* Grant it, Heaven!
We have ſeen ſad and troublous times enough.
He is, they ſay, to wed the late king's ſiſter,
Conſtantia.
1 *Off.* Friend, of that I greatly doubt.
Or I miſtake, or lord *Siffredi*'s daughter,
The gentle *Sigiſmunda,* has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond aſſiduous care to pleaſe each other,
Moſt certainly they love——O be they bleſt,
As they deſerve! It were great pity aught
Should part a matchleſs pair: the glory he,
And ſhe the blooming grace of *Sicily!*
2 *Off.* My lord *Rodolpho* comes.

SCENE VI.

RODOLPHO, *from the ſenate.*

Rod. My honeſt friends,
You may retire. [*Officers go out.*]

A ſtorm

A ſtorm is in the wind.
This will perplexes all. No, *Tancred* never
Can ſtoop to theſe conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.
Thoſe wiſe old men, thoſe plodding grave ſtate-pedants,
Forget the courſe of youth; their crooked prudence,
To baſeneſs verging ſtill, forgets to take
Into their fine-ſpun ſchemes the generous heart,
That thro' the cobweb ſyſtem burſting, lays
Their labours waſte—So will this buſineſs prove,
Or I miſtake the king—back from the pomp
He ſeem'd at firſt to ſhrink; and round his brow
I mark'd a gathering cloud, when by his ſide,
As if deſign'd to ſhare the public homage,
He ſaw the tyrant's daughter. But confeſs'd,
At leaſt to me, the doubling tempeſt frown'd,
And ſhook his ſwelling boſom, when he heard
Th' unjuſt, the baſe conditions of the will.
Uncertain, toſt in cruel agitation,
He oft, methought, addreſs'd himſelf to ſpeak
And interrupt *Siffredi*; who appear'd,
With conſcious haſte, to dread that interruption,
And hurry'd on—But hark! I hear a noiſe,
As if th' aſſembly roſe!—Ha! *Sigiſmunda*,
Oppreſs'd with grief, and wrapt in penſive ſorrow,
Paſſes along—

[Sigiſmunda *and attendants paſs thro' the back ſcene.* Laura *advances.*

SCENE VII.

RODOLPHO, LAURA.

Laur. Your high-prais'd friend, the king,
Is falſe, moſt vilely falſe! The meaneſt ſlave

Had ſhown a nobler heart; nor groſsly thus,
By the firſt bait ambition ſpread, been gull'd.
He *Manfred*'s ſon! away! it cannot be!
The ſon of that brave prince could ne'er betray
Thoſe rights ſo long uſurp'd from his great fathers,
Which he, this day, by ſuch amazing fortune,
Had juſt regain'd; he ne'er could ſacrifice
All faith, all honour, gratitude and love,
Even juſt reſentment of his father's fate,
And pride itſelf; whate'er exalts a man
Above the groveling ſons of peaſant-mud,
All in a moment—And for what? why truly,
For kind permiſſion, gracious leave, to ſit
On his own throne with tyrant *William*'s daughter!

Rod. I ſtand amaz'd—You ſurely wrong him,
Laura.
There muſt be ſome miſtake.

Laur. There can be none!
Siffredi read his full and free conſent
Before th' applauding ſenate. True indeed,
A ſmall remain of ſhame, a timorous weakneſs,
Even daſtardly in falſehood made him bluſh
To act this ſcene in *Sigiſmunda*'s eye,
Who ſunk beneath his perfidy and baſeneſs.
Hence, till to-morrow he adjourn'd the ſenate—
To-morrow fix'd with infamy to crown him!
Then, leading off his gay triumphant princeſs,
He left the poor unhappy *Sigiſmunda*,
To bend her trembling ſteps to that ſad home
His faithleſs vows will render hateful to her——
He comes—Farewel—I cannot bear his preſence!

SCENE VIII.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO.

Tanc. [*entering to* Siffredi.] Avoid me, hoary traitor!—Go, *Rodolpho*,
Give orders that all paſſages this way
Be ſhut—Defend me from a hateful world,
The bane of peace and honour—then return—
What! doſt thou haunt me ſtill? O monſtrous inſult!
Unparallel'd indignity! Juſt heaven!
Was ever king, was ever man ſo treated?
So trampled into baſeneſs!
Siff. Here, my liege,
Here ſtrike? I nor deſerve, nor aſk for mercy.
Tanc. Diſtraction!—O my ſoul—Hold, reaſon, hold
Thy giddy ſeat—O this inhuman outrage
Unhinges thought!
Siff. Exterminate thy ſervant!
Tanc. All, all but this I could have born—but this!
This daring inſolence beyond example!
This murderous ſtroke that ſtabs my peace for ever!
That wounds me there—there! where the human heart
Moſt exquiſitely feels—
Siff. O bear it not,
My royal lord! appeaſe on me your vengeance!
Tanc. Did ever tyrant image aught ſo cruel?
The loweſt ſlave that crawls upon the earth,
Robb'd of each comfort heaven beſtows on mortals,
On the bare ground has ſtill his virtue left,
The ſacred treaſures of an honeſt heart,
Which thou haſt dar'd, with raſh audacious hand,
And impious fraud, in me to violate——

Siff. Behold, my liege, that raſh audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—O glorious! happy!
If by my ruin I can ſave your honour.
Tanc. Such honour I renounce! with ſovereign ſcorn,
Greatly deteſt it, and its mean adviſer!
Haſt thou not dared beneath my name to ſhelter—
My name for other purpoſes deſign'd,
Given from the fondneſs of a faithful heart,
With the beſt love o'erflowing—haſt thou not
Beneath thy ſovereign's name baſely preſum'd
To ſhield a lie? a lie! in public utter'd,
To all deluded *Sicily?* But know,
This poor contrivance is as weak as baſe.
In ſuch a wretched toil none can be held
But fools and cowards—ſoon thy flimſy arts,
Touch'd by my juſt, my burning indignation,
Shall burſt like threads in flame!--Thy doating prudence
But more ſecures the purpoſe it would ſhake.
Had my reſolves been wavering and doubtful,
This would confirm them, make them fix'd as fate;
This adds the only motive that was wanting
To urge them on thro' war and deſolation—
What! marry her! *Conſtantia!* Her! the daughter
Of the fell tyrant who deſtroy'd my father!
The very thought is madneſs! Ere thou ſeeſt
The torch of *Hymen* light theſe hated nuptials,
Thou ſhalt behold *Sicilia* wrapt in flames,
Her cities raz'd, her valleys drench'd with ſlaughter—
Love ſet aſide—my pride aſſumes the quarrel.
My honour now is up; in ſpite of thee,
A world combin'd againſt me, I will give
This ſcatter'd Will in fragments to the winds,
Aſſert my rights, the freedom of my heart,

Cruſh

Cruſh all who dare oppoſe me to the duſt,
And heap perdition on thee!
Siff. Sir, 'tis juſt.
Exhauſt on me your rage; I claim it all.
But for thoſe public threats thy paſſion utters,
'Tis what thou canſt not do!
Tanc. I cannot! ha!
Driven to the dreadful brink of ſuch diſhonour,
Enough to make the tameſt coward brave,
And into fierceneſs rouſe the mildeſt nature,
What ſhall arreſt my vengeance? who?
Siff. Thyſelf!
Tanc. Away! dare not to juſtify thy crime!
That, that alone can aggravate its horror,
Add inſolence to inſolence—perhaps
May make my rage forget———
Siff. O let it burſt
On this grey head devoted to thy ſervice!
But when the ſtorm has vented all its fury,
Thou then muſt hear—nay more, I know, thou wilt—
Wilt hear the calm, yet ſtronger voice of reaſon.
Thou muſt reflect, that a whole people's ſafety,
The weal of truſted millions ſhould bear down,
Thyſelf the judge, thy fondeſt partial pleaſure.
Thou muſt reflect that there are other duties,
A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
Superior pleaſures far, that will oblige,
Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,
Unwarranted perhaps in common juſtice,
But which neceſſity, even virtue's tyrant,
With awful voice commanded—Yes, thou muſt,
In calmer hours, diveſt thee of thy love,
Theſe common paſſions of the vulgar breaſt,
This boiling heat of youth, and be a king!

The lover of thy people!

Tanc. Truths ill-employ'd!
Abus'd to colour gilt! A king! a king!
Yes, I will be a king, but not a ſlave!
In this will be a king! in this my people
Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
When they behold me vindicate my own.
But have I, ſay, been treated like a king?———
Heavens! could I ſtoop to ſuch outrageous uſage,
I were a mean, a ſhameleſs wretch, unworthy
To wield a ſceptre in a land of ſlaves,
A ſoil abhorr'd of virtue, ſhould belye
My father's blood, belye thoſe very maxims,
At other times, you taught my youth—*Siffredi!*

[*In a ſoftened tone of voice.*

Siff. Behold, my prince, behold thy poor old ſervant,
Whoſe darling care, theſe twenty years, has been
To nurſe thee up to virtue; who for thee,
Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
All intereſt or ambition can pour forth;
What many a ſelfiſh father would purſue
Thro' treachery and crimes: behold him here,
Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
With tears to beg thee, to controul thy paſſion,
And ſave thyſelf, thy honour, and thy people!
Kneeling with me behold the many thouſands
To thy protection truſted: fathers, mothers,
The ſacred front of venerable age,
The tender virgin and the helpleſs infant;
The miniſters of heaven, thoſe, who maintain,
Around thy throne, the majeſty of rule;
And thoſe, whoſe labour, ſcorch'd by winds and ſun,
Feeds the rejoicing public: ſee them all,
Here at thy feet, conjuring thee to ſave them,

From

From miſery and war, from crimes and rapine!
Can there be aught, kind Heaven! in ſelf-indulgence
To weigh down theſe? This aggregate of love,
With which compar'd the deareſt private paſſion
Is but the wafted duſt upon the balance?
Turn not away—Oh is there not ſome part,
In thy great heart, ſo ſenſible to kindneſs,
And generous warmth, ſome nobler part, to feel
The prayers and tears of theſe, the mingled voice
Of heaven and earth!

Tanc. There is! and thou haſt touch'd it.
Riſe, riſe, *Siffredi*—Oh! thou haſt undone me,
Unkind old man! O ill-entreated *Tancred!*
Which way ſoe'er I turn, diſhonour rears
Her hideous front—and miſery and ruin!
Was it for this you took ſuch care to form me?
For this imbued me with the quickeſt ſenſe
Of ſhame; theſe finer feelings, that ne'er vex
The common maſs of mortals, dully happy
In bleſt inſenſibility? O rather
You ſhould have ſear'd my heart; taught me, that power
And ſplendid intereſt lord it ſtill o'er virtue;
That, gilded by proſperity and pride,
There is no ſhame, no meanneſs: temper'd thus,
I had been fit to rule a venal world.
Alas! what meant thy wantonneſs of prudence?
Why have you rais'd this miſerable conflict
Betwixt the duties of the king and man?
Set virtue againſt virtue?—Ah, *Siffredi!*
'Tis thy ſuperfluous, thy unfeeling wiſdom,
That has involv'd me in a maze of error,
Almoſt beyond retreat—But hold, my ſoul,
Thy ſteady purpoſe—Toſt by various paſſions,
To this eternal anchor keep—There is,

Can be no public without private virtue—
Then mark me well, obſerve what I command;
It is the ſole expedient now remaining—
To-morrow, when the ſenate meets again,
Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit;
Nor that alone, try to repair its miſchief;
There all thy power, thy eloquence and intereſt
Exert, to reinſtate me in my rights,
And from thy own dark ſnares to diſembroil me—
Start not, my lord—This muſt and ſhall be done!
Or here our friendſhip ends—Howe'er diſguis'd,
Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Siff. I ſhould indeed deſerve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I ſo ſlightly,
From principles ſo weak, done what I did,
As e'er to diſavow it—

Tanc. Ha!

Siff. My liege,
Expect not this—Tho' practis'd long in courts,
I have not ſo far learn'd their ſubtle trade,
To veer obedient with each guſt of paſſion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders,
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever ſhake me from that ſolid rock,
Nor ſmiles nor frowns.—

Tanc. You will not then?

Siff. I cannot!

Tanc. Away! begone!—O my *Rodolpho*, come,
And ſave me from this traitor!—Hence, I ſay,
Avoid my preſence ſtrait! and know, old man,
Thou my worſt foe beneath the maſk of friendſhip,
Who, not content to trample in the duſt
My deareſt rights, doſt with cool inſolence
Perſiſt, and call it duty; hadſt thou not

A daughter

A daughter that protects thee, thou ſhoud'ſt feel
The vengeance thou deſerveſt—No reply!
Away!

SCENE IX.

TANCRED, RODOLPHO,

Rod. What can incenſe my prince ſo highly
Againſt his friend *Siffredi?*
Tanc. Friend! *Rodolpho?*
When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How play'd me like a boy, a baſe-born wretch,
Who had nor heart nor ſpirit! thou wilt ſtand
Amaz'd, and wonder at my ſtupid patience.
Rod. I heard, with mixt aſtoniſhment and grief,
The king's unjuſt diſhonourable will,
Void in itſelf—I ſaw you ſtung with rage,
And writhing in the ſnare; juſt as I went,
At your command, to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.
Tanc. O he adviſ'd it!
Theſe many years he has in ſecret hatch'd
This black contrivance, glorious in the ſcheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traiterous virtue.
But that was nought, *Rodolpho*, nothing, nothing!
O that was gentle, blameleſs, to what follow'd!
I had, my friend, to *Sigiſmunda* given,
To huſh her fears, in the full guſh of fondneſs,
A blank ſign'd by my hand—and he—O heavens!
Was ever ſuch a wild attempt!—he wrote
Beneath my name an abſolute compliance
To this deteſted Will; nay, dared to read it
Before myſelf, on my inſulted throne
His idle pageant plac'd—O words are weak

To

To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
That whirl'd from thought to thought my ſoul in tempeſt,
Now on the point to burſt, and now by ſhame
Repreſs'd—But in the face of *Sicily*,
All mad with acclamation, what, *Rodolpho*,
What could I do? The ſole relief that roſe
To my diſtracted mind, was to adjourn
Th' aſſembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
What can be done?—O it avails not what!
I care not what is done—My only care
Is how to clear my faith to *Sigiſmunda*.
She thinks me falſe! She caſt a look that kill'd me!
O I am baſe in *Sigiſmunda*'s eye!
The loweſt of mankind, the moſt perfidious!

Rod. This was a ſtrain of inſolence indeed,
A daring outrage of ſo ſtrange a nature,
As ſtuns me quite——

Tanc. Curs'd be my timid prudence!
That daſh'd not back, that moment, in his face,
The bold preſumptuous lie—and curs'd this hand!
That from a ſtart of poor diſſimulation,
Led off my *Sigiſmunda*'s hated rival.
Ah then! what, poiſon'd by the falſe appearance,
What, *Sigiſmunda*, were thy thoughts of me?
How, in the ſilent bitterneſs of ſoul,
How didſt thou ſcorn me! hate mankind, thyſelf,
For truſting to the vows of faithleſs *Tancred!*
For ſuch I ſeem'd—I was!—The thought diſtracts me!
I ſhould have caſt a flattering world aſide,
Ruſh'd from my throne, before them all avow'd her,
The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
And ſpurn'd the ſhameful fetters thrown upon it—
Inſtead of that—confuſion!—what I did

Has

Has clinch'd the chain, confirm'd *Siffredi*'s crime,
And fix'd me down to infamy!
Rod. My lord,
Blame not the conduct, which your ſituation
Tore from your tortur'd heart—What could you do?
Had you, ſo circumſtanc'd, in open ſenate,
Before th' aſtoniſh'd public, with no friends
Prepar'd, no party form'd, affronted thus
The haughty princeſs and her powerful faction,
Supported by this Will, the ſudden ſtroke,
Abrupt and premature, might have recoil'd
Upon yourſelf, even your own friends revolted,
And turn'd at once the public ſcale againſt you.
Beſides, conſider had you then detected
In its freſh guilt this action of *Siffredi*,
You muſt with ſignal vengeance have chaſtis'd
The treaſonable deed—Nothing ſo mean
As weak inſulted power that dares not puniſh.
And how would that have ſuited with your love?
His daughter preſent too? Truſt me, your conduct,
Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
Was fortunate and wiſe—Not that I mean
E'er to adviſe ſubmiſſion——
Tanc. Heavens! Submiſſion!
Could I deſcend to bear it, even in thought,
Deſpiſe me, you, the world, and *Sigiſmunda!*
Submiſſion! No!—To-morrow's glorious light
Shall flaſh diſcovery on this ſcene of baſeneſs.
Whatever be the riſque, by heavens! to-morrow,
I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built ſchemes
Of theſe old men, and ſhew my faithful ſenate,
That *Manfred*'s ſon knows to aſſert and wear,
With undiminiſh'd dignity, that crown
This unexpected day has plac'd upon him.

But

But this, my friend, theſe ſtormy guſts of pride
Are foreign to my love—Till *Sigiſmunda*
Be diſabus'd, my breaſt is tumult all,
And can obey no ſettled courſe of reaſon.
I ſee her ſtill, I feel her powerful image,
That look, where with reproach complaint was mix'd,
Big with ſoft woe and gentle indignation,
Which ſeem'd at once to pity and to ſcorn me——
O let me find her! I too long have left
My *Sigiſmunda* to converſe with tears,
A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
But ah! how, clogg'd, with this accurſed ſtate,
A tedious world, ſhall I now find acceſs?
Her father too—Ten thouſand horrors croud
Into the wild fantaſtic eye of love——
Who knows what he may do? Come then, my friend,
And by thy ſiſter's hand O let me ſteal
A letter to her boſom—I no longer
Can bear her abſence, by the juſt contempt
She now muſt brand me with, inflam'd to madneſs.
Fly, my *Rodolpho*, fly! engage thy ſiſter
To aid my letter, and this very evening
Secure an interview—I would not bear
This rack another day, not for my kingdom!
Till then deep-plung'd in ſolitude and ſhades,
I will not ſee the hated face of man.
Thought drives on thought, on paſſions, paſſions roll;
Her ſmiles alone can calm my raging ſoul.

END *of the* SECOND ACT.

ACT

ACT III. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA *alone, ſitting in a diſconſolate poſture.*

AH tyrant prince! ah more than faithleſs *Tancred!*
Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falſhood!
Hadſt thou, this morning, when my hopeleſs heart,
Submiſſive to my fortune and my duty,
Had ſo much ſpirit left, as to be willing
To give thee back thy vows, ah! hadſt thou then
Confeſs'd the ſad neceſſity thy ſtate
Impos'd upon thee, and with gentle friendſhip,
Since we muſt part at laſt, our parting ſoften'd:
I ſhould indeed—I ſhould have been unhappy,
But not to this extreme—Amidſt my grief,
I had, with penſive pleaſure, cheriſh'd ſtill
The ſweet remembrance of thy former love;
Thy image ſtill had dwelt upon my ſoul,
And made our guiltleſs woes not undelightful,
But cooly thus—How couldſt thou be ſo cruel?—
Thus to revive my hopes, to ſooth my love
And call forth all its tenderneſs, then ſink me
In black deſpair—What unrelenting pride
Poſſeſs'd thy breaſt, that thou couldſt bear unmov'd
To ſee me bent beneath a weight of ſhame?
Pangs thou canſt never feel? How couldſt thou drag me,
In barbarous triumph at a rival's car?
How make me witneſs to a ſight of horror?
That hand, which, but a few ſhort hours ago,
So wantonly abus'd my ſimple faith,
Before th' atteſting world given to another,
Irrevocably given!—There was a time,
When the leaſt cloud that hung upon my brow,
Perhaps imagin'd only, touch'd thy pity.

Then

Then, brighten'd often by the ready tear,
Thy looks were ſoftneſs all; then the quick heart,
In every nerve alive, forgot itſelf,
And for each other then we felt alone.
But now, alas! thoſe tender days are fled;
Now thou canſt ſee me wretched, pierc'd with anguiſh,
With ſtudied anguiſh of thy own creating,
Nor wet thy harden'd eye—Hold, let me think—
I wrong thee ſure; thou canſt not be ſo baſe,
As meanly in my miſery to triumph.
What is it then? Why ſhould I ſearch for pain?—
O 'tis as bad!——'Tis fickleneſs of nature,
'Tis fickly love extinguiſh'd by ambition——
Is there, kind heaven, no conſtancy in man?
No ſteadfaſt truth, no generous fixt affection,
That can bear up againſt a ſelfiſh world?
No, there is none—Even *Tancred* is inconſtant?
[*Riſing.*]
Hence! let me fly this ſcene!—Whate'er I ſee,
Theſe roofs, theſe walls, each object that ſurrounds me,
Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly?
The groves are worſe, the ſoft retreat of *Belmont*,
Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy ſummits,
Will wound my buſy memory to torture,
And all its ſhades will whiſper—faithleſs *Tancred!*—
My father comes.—How, ſunk in this diſorder,
Shall I ſuſtain his preſence?

SCENE II.

SIFFREDI, SIGISMUNDA.

Siff. Sigiſmunda,
My deareſt child! I grieve to find thee thus
A prey to tears. I know the powerful cauſe

From

From which they flow, and therefore can excuſe them,
But not their wilful obſtinate continuance.
Come, rouſe thee then, call up thy drooping ſpirit;
Come, wake to reaſon from this dream of love,
And ſhew the world thou art *Siffredi*'s daughter.

Sigiſ. Alas! I am unworthy of that name.

Siff. Thou art indeed to blame; thou haſt too raſhly
Engag'd thy heart, without a father's ſanction.
But this I can forgive. The king has virtues,
That plead thy full excuſe; nor was I void
Of blame, to truſt thee to thoſe dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. 'Tho' he blames,
Thy tender father pities more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter ſtill; and, if thy heart
Will now reſume its pride, aſſert itſelf,
And greatly riſe ſuperior to this trial,
I to my warmeſt confidence again
Will take thee, and eſteem thee more my daughter.

Sigiſ. O you are gentler far than I deſerve!
It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my ſoul to your ſupreme commands,
Your wiſeſt will; and tho', by love betray'd—
Alas! and puniſh'd too—I have tranſgreſs'd
The niceſt bounds of duty, yet I feel
A ſentiment of tenderneſs, a ſource
Of filial nature ſpringing in my breaſt,
That, ſhould it kill me, ſhall controul this paſſion,
And make me all ſubmiſſion and obedience
To you, my honour'd lord, the beſt of fathers.

Siff. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
Thou only joy and hope of theſe grey hairs!
Come! let me take thee to a parent's heart;
There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
Even with the dew of theſe paternal tears,

Revive

Revive and nouriſh this becoming ſpirit———
Then thou doſt promiſe me, my *Sigiſmunda*—
Thy father ſtoops to make it his requeſt—
Thou wilt reſign thy fond preſumptuous hopes,
And henceforth never more indulge one thought
That in the light of love regards the king?

Sigiſ. Hopes I have none! Thoſe by this fatal day
Are blaſted all—But from my ſoul to baniſh,
While weeping memory there retains her ſeat,
Thoughts which the pureſt boſom might have cheriſh'd
Once my delight, now even in anguiſh charming,
Is more, alas! my lord, that I can promiſe

Siff. Abſence and time, the ſoftner of our paſſions,
Will conquer this. Mean-time, I hope from thee
A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
Exert thy utmoſt force, nor languiſh thus
Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
Let not thy father bluſh to hear it ſaid,
His daughter was ſo weak, e'er to admit
A thought ſo void of reaſon, that a king
Should to his rank, his honour and his glory,
The high important duties of a throne,
Even to his throne itſelf, madly prefer
A wild romantic paſſion, the fond child
Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
That he ſhould quit his heaven-appointed ſtation,
Deſert his awful charge, the care of all
The toiling millions which this iſle contains;
Nay more, ſhould plunge them into war and ruin:
And all to ſooth a ſick imagination,
A miſerable weakneſs—Muſt for thee,
To make thee bleſt, *Sicilia* be unhappy?
The king himſelf, loſt to the nobler ſenſe
Of manly praiſe, become the piteous hero

Of

Of ſome ſoft tale, and ruſh on ſure deſtruction?
Canſt thou, my daughter, let the monſtrous thought
Poſſeſs one moment thy perverted fancy?
Rouſe thee, for ſhame! and if a ſpark of virtue
Lyes ſlumbering in thy ſoul, bid it blaze forth;
Nor ſink unequal to the glorious leſſon,
This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.

Sigiſ. Ah, that was not from virtue!—Had, my father,
That been his aim, I yield to what you ſay;
'Tis powerful truth, unanſwerable reaſon.
Then, then, with ſad, but duteous reſignation,
I had ſubmitted, as became your daughter;
But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
Were to my duty reconcil'd, to raiſe them
To yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,
Then rudely daſh them down—There is the ſting!
The blaſting view is ever preſent to me——
Why did you drag me to a ſight ſo cruel?

Siff. It was a ſcene to fire thy emulation.

Sigiſ. It was a ſcene of perfidy!—But know,
I will do more than imitate the king—
For he is falſe!—I, tho' ſincerely pierc'd
With the beſt, trueſt paſſion, ever touch'd
A virgin's breaſt, here vow to heaven and you,
Tho' from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
To caſt this Prince—What would you more, my father?

Siff. Yes, one thing more--thy father then is happy--
Tho' by the voice of innocence and virtue
Abſolv'd, we live not to ourſelves alone:
A rigorous world, with peremptory ſway,
Subjects us all, and even the nobleſt moſt.
This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
Demands one ſtep; a ſtep, by which convinc'd

The

The king may ſee thy heart diſdains to wear
A chain which his has greatly thrown aſide.
'Tis fitting too, thy ſex's pride commands thee,
To ſhew th' approving world thou canſt reſign,
As well as he, nor with inferior ſpirit,
A paſſion fatal to the public weal.
But, above all, thou muſt root out for ever
From the king's breaſt the leaſt remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mention'd love diſhonour.
Theſe things, my daughter, that muſt needs be done,
Can but this way be done——by the ſafe refuge,
The ſacred ſhelter of a huſband's arms.
And there is one—

Sigiſ. Good heavens! what means my lord?

Siff. One of illuſtrious family, high rank,
Yet ſtill of higher dignity and merit,
Who can and will protect thee; one to awe
The king himſelf—Nay, hear me, *Sigiſmunda*—
The noble *Oſmond* courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word—This day—

Sigiſ. [*kneeling.*] My father!
Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees!
O if you ever wiſh'd to ſee me happy;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twin'd around your neck,
You ſnatch'd me to your boſom, kiſs'd my eyes,
And melting ſaid you ſaw my mother there;
O ſave me from that worſt ſeverity
Of fate! O outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree—I cannot!—'tis impoſſible!—
So ſoon withdraw it, give it to another—
Hear me, my deareſt father! hear the voice
Of nature and humanity, that plead
As well as juſtice for me!—Not to chuſe

Without

Without your wiſe direction may be duty;
But ſtill my choice is free—That is a right,
Which even the loweſt ſlave can never loſe.
And would you thus degrade me? make me baſe?
For ſuch it were, to give my worthleſs perſon
Without my heart, an injury to *Oſmond*,
The higheſt can be done—Let me, my lord—
Or I ſhall die, ſhall by the ſudden change
Be to diſtraction ſhock'd—let me wear out
My hapleſs days in ſolitude and ſilence,
Far from the malice of a prying world!
At leaſt—you cannot ſure refuſe me this—
Give me a little time—I will do all,
All I can do, to pleaſe you!—O your eye
Sheds a kind beam——
Siff. My daughter! you abuſe
The ſoftneſs of my nature—
Sigiſ. Here, my father,
Till you relent, here will I grow for ever!
Siff. Riſe, *Sigiſmunda*.—Tho' you touch may heart,
Nothing can ſhake th' inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determin'd reaſon.
Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Reſolve, I charge thee, to receive earl *Oſmond*,
As ſuits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him—
Sigiſ. Spare me, my deareſt father!
Siff, [*aſide.*] I muſt ruſh
From her ſoft graſp, or nature will betray me!
O grant us, Heaven! that fortitude of mind,
Which liſtens to our duty, not our paſſions—
Quit me, my child!
Sigiſ. You cannot, O my father!
You cannot leave me thus!

Siff. Come

Siff. Come hither, *Laura.*
Come to thy friend. Now ſhew thyſelf a friend.
Combat her weakneſs; diſſipate her tears;
Cheriſh, and reconcile her to her duty.

SCENE III.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sigiſ. O woe on woe! diſtreſs'd by love and duty!
O every way unhappy *Sigiſmunda!*
Laur. Forgive me, madam, if I blame your grief.
How can you waſte your tears on one ſo falſe?
Unworthy of your tenderneſs? to whom
Nought but contempt is due and indignation?
Sigiſ. You know not half the horrors of my fate!
I might perhaps have learn'd to ſcorn his falſhood;
Nay, when the firſt ſad burſt of tears was paſt,
I might have rous'd my pride and ſcorn'd himſelf—
But 'tis too much, this greateſt laſt misfortune——
O whither ſhall I fly? Where hide me, *Laura,*
From the dire ſcene my father now prepares!
Laur. What thus alarms you, madam!
Sigiſ. Can it be?
Can I——ah no!——at once give to another
My violated heart? in one wild moment?
He brings earl *Oſmond* to receive my vows!
O dreadful change! for *Tancred,* haughty *Oſmond!*
Laur. Now, on my ſoul, 'tis what an outrag'd heart,
Like your's, ſhould wiſh--I ſhould, by heavens, eſteem it
Moſt exquiſite revenge!
Sigiſ. Revenge on whom?
On my own heart, already but too wretched!
Laur. On him! this *Tancred!* who has baſely ſold,
For the dull form of deſpicable grandeur,

His

His faith, his love!—At once a ſlave and tyrant!
Sigiſ. Oh rail at me, at my believing folly,
My vain ill-founded hopes, but ſpare him, *Laura!*
Laur. Who rais'd theſe hopes? who triumphs o'er that weakneſs?
Pardon the word—You greatly merit him;
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp!
You rais'd him by your ſmiles when he was nothing!
Where is your woman pride; that guardian ſpirit
Given us to daſh the perfidy of man?
Ye powers! I cannot bear the thought with patience—
Yet recent from the moſt unſparing vows
The tongue of love e'er laviſh'd; from your hopes
So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded;
Before the public thus, before your father,
By an irrevocable ſolemn deed,
With ſuch inhuman ſcorn, to throw you from him!
To give his faithleſs hand, yet warm from thine,
With complicated meanneſs, to *Conſtantia!*
And to compleat his crime, when thy weak limbs
Could ſcarce ſupport thee, then, of thee regardleſs,
To lead her off!
Sigiſ. That was indeed a ſight
To poiſon love! to turn it into rage
And keen contempt!—What means this ſtupid weakneſs
That hangs upon me? Hence, unworthy tears!
Diſgrace my cheek no more! No more my heart,
For one ſo cooly falſe or meanly fickle—
O it imports not which—dare to ſuggeſt
The leaſt excuſe!—Yes, traitor, I will wring
Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confuſion!
I will not pine away my days for thee,
Sighing to brooks and groves; while, with vain pity,

You

You in a rival's arms lament my fate———
No! let me periſh! ere I tamely be
That ſoft, that patient, gentle *Sigiſmunda*,
Who can conſole her with the wretched boaſt,
She was for thee unhappy!——if I am,
I will be nobly ſo!——*Sicilia*'s daughters
Shall wondering ſee in me a great example
Of one who puniſh'd an ill-judging heart,
Who made it bow to what it moſt abhorr'd!
Cruſh'd it to miſery! for having thus
So lightly liſten'd to a worthleſs lover!

Laur. At laſt it mounts! the kindling pride of virtue:
Truſt me, thy marriage will imbitter his———

Sigiſ. O may the furies light his nuptial torch!
Be it accurs'd as mine! for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealouſy awak'd, and fell remorſe,
Pour all their fierceſt venom thro' his breaſt!
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow!—
Let me not think—By injur'd love! I vow,
Thou ſhalt, baſe prince! perfidious and inhuman!
Thou ſhalt behold me in another's arms!
In his thou hateſt! *Oſmond*'s!

Laur. That will grind
His heart with ſecret rage! Aye, that will ſting
His ſoul to madneſs! ſet him up a terror,
A ſpectacle of woe to faithleſs lovers!
Your cooler thought, beſides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble *Oſmond*
From the ſame ſtock with him derives his birth,
Firſt of *Sicilian* barons, prudent, brave,
Of ſtricteſt honour, and by all rever'd.———

Sigiſ. Talk not of *Oſmond*, but perfidious *Tancred!*

Rail

Rail at him, rail! invent new names of ſcorn!
Aſſiſt me, *Laura*; lend my rage freſh fewel;
Support my ſtaggering purpoſe, which already
Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain!
How have I ly'd to my own heart!—Alas!
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me?
Ten thouſand crouding images diſtract
My tortur'd thought——And is it come to this?
Our hopes? our vows? our oft repeated wiſhes,
Breath'd from the fervent ſoul, and full of heaven,
To make each other happy?—come to this!

Laur. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy reſolution fix'd, yet, *Sigiſmunda*,
O think, how deeply, how beyond retreat,
Thy father is engag'd.

Sigiſ. Ah wretched weakneſs!
That thus enthrals my ſoul, that chaſes thence
Each nobler thought, the ſenſe of every duty!——
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpleſs years,
Thy tenderneſs for me? an eye ſtill beam'd
With love? a brow that never knew a frown?
Nor a harſh word thy tongue? Shall I for theſe
Repay thy ſtooping venerable age,
With ſhame, diſquiet, anguiſh and diſhonour?
It muſt not be!—Thou firſt of angels! come,
Sweet filial piety! and firm my breaſt!
Yes, let one daughter to her fate ſubmit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!——
Laura! they come!——O heavens! I cannot ſtand
The horrid trial!——Open, open, earth!
And hide me from their view!

Laur. Madam!——

SCENE IV.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Siff. My daughter,
Behold my noble friend who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my ſon I ſhall be proud;
Nor ſhall I leſs be pleas'd in this alliance
To ſee thee happy.

Oſm. Think not, I preſume,
Madam, on this your father's kind conſent,
To make me bleſt. I love you from a heart,
That ſeeks your good ſuperior to my own;
And will, by every art of tender friendſhip,
Conſult your deareſt welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not diſavow your father's choice?

Sigiſ. I am a daughter, Sir—and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—Support me, *Laura.*
[*Faints.*]

Siff. Help——Bear her off—She breathes——my daughter!——

Sigiſ. Oh!——
Forgive my weakneſs—ſoft——my *Laura*, lead me—
To my apartment.

Siff. Pardon me, my lord,
If, by this ſudden accident alarm'd,
I leave you for a moment.

SCENE V.

OSMOND *alone.*

Let me think——
What can this mean?——Is it to me averſion!
Or is it, as I fear'd, ſhe loves another?
Ha!

Ha!—yes—perhaps the king, the young count *Tancred!*
They were bred up together——Surely that,
That cannot be——Has he not given his hand
In the moſt ſolemn manner to *Conſtantia?*
Does not his crown depend upon the deed?
No——if they lov'd, and this old ſtateſman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a ſubject.
His virtues I eſteem—nay more, I truſt them——
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of *Sicily*——
O 'tis a glorious bribe, too much for man!——
What is it then?——I care not, what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,
That my propos'd alliance, by her father,
And even herſelf accepted, be not ſcorn'd.
I love her too——I never knew till now
To what a pitch I lov'd her. O ſhe ſhot
Ten thouſand charms into my inmoſt ſoul!
She look'd ſo mild, ſo amiably gentle,
She bow'd her head, ſhe glow'd with ſuch confuſion,
Such lovelineſs of modeſty! She is,
In gracious mind, in manners, and in perſon,
The perfect model of all female beauty!——
She muſt be mine——She is!——If yet her heart
Conſents not to my happineſs, her duty,
Join'd to my tender cares, will gain ſo much
Upon her generous nature——That will follow.
The man of ſenſe, who acts a prudent part,
Not flattering ſteals, but forms himſelf the heart.

END *of the* THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The garden belonging to SIFFREDI's *houſe.*

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

SIGISMUNDA, *with a letter in her hand.*

'TIS done!—I am a ſlave!—The fatal vow
Has paſs'd my lips!—Methought in thoſe ſad moments,
The tombs around, the ſaints, the darken'd altar,
And all the trembling ſhrines with horror ſhook.
But here is ſtill new matter of diſtreſs.
O *Tancred*, ceaſe to perſecute me more!
O grudge me not ſome calmer ſtate of woe!
Some quiet gloom to ſhade my hopeleſs days,
Where I may never hear of love and thee!—
Has *Laura* too conſpir'd againſt my peace?
Why did you take this letter?—bear it back—
[*Giving her the letter.*]
I will not court new pain.
Laur. Madam, *Rodolpho*
Urg'd me ſo much, nay, even with tears conjur'd me,
But this once more to ſerve th' unhappy king—
For ſuch he ſaid he was—that tho' enrag'd,
Equal with thee, at his inhuman falſhood,
I could not to my brother's fervent prayers
Refuſe this office—Read it—His excuſes
Will only more expoſe his falſhood.
Sigiſ. No.
It ſuits not *Oſmond*'s wife to read one line
From that contagious hand—ſhe knows too well!
Laur. He paints him out diſtreſs'd beyond expreſſion,
Even

Even on the point of madneſs. Wild as winds,
And fighting ſeas, he raves. His paſſions mix,
With ceaſeleſs rage, all in each giddy moment.
He dies to ſee you and to clear his faith.

Sigiſ. Save me from that!—That would be worſe than all!

Laur. I but report my brother's words; who then
Began to talk of ſome dark impoſition,
That had deceiv'd us all: when, interrupted,
We heard your father and earl *Oſmond* near,
As ſummon'd to *Conſtantia*'s court they went.

Sigiſ. Ha! impoſition?—Well!—If I am doom'd
To be, o'er all my ſex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would reſiſt—Give me the letter—
To know the worſt is ſome relief—Alas!
It was not thus, with ſuch dire palpitations,
That, *Tancred*, once I us'd to read thy letters.

[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to* Laura.]

Ah, fond remembrance blinds me!—Read it, *Laura.*

LAURA *reads.*

Deliver me, Sigiſmunda, *from that moſt exquiſite miſery which a faithful heart can ſuffer—To be thought baſe by her, from whoſe eſteem even virtue borrows new charms. When I ſubmitted to my cruel ſituation, it was not falſhood you beheld, but an exceſs of love. Rather than endanger that, I for a while gave up my honour. Every moment till I ſee you ſtabs me with ſeverer pangs than real guilt itſelf can feel. Let me then conjure you to meet me in the garden, towards the cloſe of the day, when I will explain this myſtery. We have been moſt inhumanely abuſed; and that by the means of the very paper which I gave you, from the warmeſt ſincerity of love, to aſſure to you the heart and hand of*

Tancred.

Sigiſ. There,

Sigiſ. There, *Laura*, there, the dreadful ſecret ſprung!
That paper! ah that paper! it ſuggeſts
A thouſand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it; and he perhaps—I dare not caſt
A look that way—if yet indeed you love me,
O blaſt me not, kind *Tancred*, with the truth!
O pitying keep me ignorant for ever!
What ſtrange peculiar miſery is mine?
Reduc'd to wiſh the man I love were falſe!
Why was I hurry'd to a ſtep ſo raſh?
Repairleſs woe!—I might have waited, ſure,
A few ſhort hours—No duty that forbad—
I ow'd thy love that juſtice; till this day
Thy love an image of all perfect goodneſs!
A beam from heaven that glow'd with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one diſtracted moment?
Ah the cold prudence of remorſeleſs age!
Ah parents, traitors to your children's bliſs!
Ah curs'd, ah blind revenge!—On every hand
I was betray'd—You, *Laura*, too, betray'd me!—

Laur. Who, who, but he, whate'er he writes, betray'd you?
Or falſe or puſillanimous. For once,
I will with you ſuppoſe, that this agreement
To the king's will was forg'd—Tho' forg'd by whom?
Your father ſcorns the crime. Yet what avails it?
This, if it clears his truth, condemns his ſpirit.
A youthful king, by love and honour fir'd,
Patient to ſit on his inſulted throne,
And let an outrage, of ſo high a nature,
Unpuniſh'd paſs, uncheck'd, uncontradicted—
O 'tis a meanneſs equal even to falſhood!

Sigiſ. Laura,

Sigiſ. Laura, no more—We have already judg'd
Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what ſeems
A trifle, a mere nothing, by itſelf,
In ſome nice ſituations, turns the ſcale
Of fate, and rules the moſt important actions.
Yes, I begin to feel a ſad preſage:
I am undone from that eternal ſource
Of human woes—The judgment of the paſſions.
But what have I to do with theſe excuſes?
O ceaſe, my treacherous heart, to give them room!
It ſuits not thee to plead a lover's cauſe;
Even to lament my fate is now diſhonour.
Nought now remains, but with relentleſs purpoſe
To ſhun all interviews, all clearing up
Of this dark ſcene; to wrap myſelf in gloom,
In ſolitude and ſhades; there to devour
The ſilent ſorrows ever ſwelling here;
And ſince I muſt be wretched—for I muſt—
To claim the mighty miſery myſelf,
Engroſs it all, and ſpare a hapleſs father.
Hence let me fly!—the hour approaches———

Laur. Madam,
Behold he comes—the king—

Sigiſ. Heavens! how eſcape?
No—I will ſtay—This one laſt meeting—Leave me.

SCENE II.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. And are theſe long long hours of torture paſt?
My life! my *Sigiſmunda!*
[*Throwing himſelf at her feet.*]

Sigiſ. Riſe, my lord.

To ſee my ſovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tanc. O let me kiſs the ground on which you tread!
Let me exhale my ſoul in ſofteſt tranſport!
Since I again embrace my *Sigiſmunda!* [*Riſing.*]
Unkind! how couldſt thou ever deem me falſe?
How thus diſhonour love;—O I could much
Embitter my complaint!—How low were then
Thy thoughts of me? How didſt thou then affront
The human heart itſelf? After the vows,
The fervent truth, the tender proteſtations,
Which mine has often pour'd, to let thy breaſt,
Whate'er th' appearance was, admit ſuſpicion?

Sigiſ. How! when I heard myſelf your full conſent
To the late king's ſo juſt and prudent will?
Heard it before you read, in ſolemn ſenate?
When I beheld you give your royal hand,
To her, whoſe birth and dignity, of right,
Demands that high alliance? Yes, my lord,
You have done well. The man, whom heaven appoints
To govern others, ſhould himſelf firſt learn
To bend his paſſions to the ſway of reaſon.
In all you have done well; but when you bid
My humbled hopes look up to you again,
And ſooth'd with wanton cruelty my weakneſs—
That too was well—My vanity deſerv'd
The ſharp rebuke, whoſe fond extravagance
Could ever dream to balance your repoſe,
Your glory and the welfare of a people.

Tanc. Chide on, chide on. Thy ſoft reproaches now,
Inſtead of wounding, only ſooth my fondneſs.
No, no, thou charming conſort of my ſoul!
I never lov'd thee with ſuch faithful ardor,
As in that cruel miſerable moment
You thought me falſe; when even my honour ſtoop'd

To

To wear for thee a baffled face of baſeneſs.
It was thy barbarous father, *Sigiſmunda*,
Who caught me in the toil. He turn'd that paper,
Meant for th' aſſuring bond of nuptial love,
To ruin it for ever; he, he wrote
That forg'd conſent, you heard, beneath my name;
Nay, dar'd before my outraged throne to read it!
Had he not been thy father—Ha! my love!
You tremble, you grow pale.

Sigiſ. Oh leave me, *Tancred!*

Tanc. No!—Leave thee?—Never! never! till you ſet
My heart at peace, till theſe dear lips again
Pronounce thee mine! Without thee I renounce
Myſelf, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—

Sigiſ. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
Can be to thine united——

Tanc. Sigiſmunda!
What doſt thou mean? Thy words, thy look, thy manner
Seem to conceal ſome horrid ſecret—heavens!—
No—That was wild—Diſtraction fires the thought!—

Sigiſ. Enquire no more——I never can be thine.

Tanc. What, who ſhall interpoſe? who dares attempt
To brave the fury of an injur'd king?
Who, ere he ſees thee raviſh'd from his hopes,
Will wrap all blazing *Sicily* in flames——

Sigiſ. In vain your power, my lord—This fatal error,
Join'd to my father's unrelenting will,
Has plac'd an everlaſting bar betwixt us—
I am—earl *Oſmond*'s—Wife.

Tanc. Earl *Oſmond*'s wife!——

[*After a long pauſe, during which they look at one anothor with the higheſt agitation and moſt tender diſtreſs.*]

Heavens! did I hear thee right? what! marry'd? marry'd?

Loſt to thy faithful *Tancred!* loſt for ever!
Couldſt thou then doom me to ſuch matchleſs woe,
Without ſo much as hearing me?—Diſtraction!—
Alas! what haſt thou done? Ah, *Sigiſmunda!*
Thy raſh credulity has done a deed,
Which of two happieſt lovers—that ere felt
The bliſsful power, has made two finiſh'd wretches!
But—Madneſs!—Sure, thou know'ſt it cannot be!
This hand is mine! a thouſand thouſand vows——

SCENE III.

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Oſm. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*] Madam,
this hand, by the moſt ſolemn rites,
A little hour ago, was given to me:
And did not ſovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it——thus!

Tanc. Ha! who art thou!
Preſumptuous man?

Sigiſ. [*aſide.*] Where is my father? heavens! [*Goes out.*]

Oſm. One thou ſhouldſt better know—Yes—view
me—one!
Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Againſt a faithleſs prince, an upſtart king,
Whoſe firſt baſe deed is what a harden'd tyrant
Would bluſh to act.

Tanc. Inſolent *Oſmond!* know,
This upſtart king will hurl confuſion on thee,
And all who ſhall invade his ſacred rights,
Prior to thine—Thine founded on compulſion,
On infamous deceit; while his proceed
From mutual love and free long-plighted faith.

She

She is, and ſhall be mine!——I will annul,
By the high power with which the laws inveſt me,
Thoſe guilty forms in which you have entrap'd
Baſely entrap'd, to thy deteſted nuptials,
My queen betroth'd; who has my heart, my hand,
And ſhall partake my throne——If, haughty lord,
If this thou didſt not know, then know it now!
And know beſides, as I have told thee this,
Shouldſt thou but think to urge thy treaſon further—
Than treaſon more! treaſon againſt my love!——
Thy life ſhall anſwer for it!

Oſm. Ha! my life!——
It moves my ſcorn to hear thy empty threats.
When was it that a *Norman* baron's life
Became ſo vile, as on the frown of king's
To hang?—Of that, my lord, the law muſt judge;
Or if the law be weak, my guardian ſword—

Tanc. Dare not to touch it, traitor! leſt my rage
Break looſe, and do a deed that miſbecomes me.

SCENE IV.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, OSMOND.

Siff. [*entering.*] My gracious lord! what is it I behold?
My ſovereign in contention with his ſubjects?
Surely this houſe deſerves from royal *Tancred*
A little more regard than to be made
A ſcene of troubles and unſeemly jars.
It grieves my ſoul, it baffles every hope,
It makes me ſick of life, to ſee thy glory
Thus blaſted in the bud—Heavens! can your highneſs
From your exalted character deſcend,
The dignity of virtue; and, inſtead
Of being the protector of our rights,

The

The holy guardian of domeſtic bliſs,
Unkindly thus diſturb the ſweet repoſe,
The ſacred peace of families, for which
Alone the free-born race of man to laws
And government ſubmitted?

Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my ſtation
Are not to me unknown—But thou, old man,
Doſt thou not bluſh to talk of rights invaded?
And of our beſt, our deareſt bliſs diſturb'd?
Thou! who with more than barbarous perfidy
Haſt trampled all allegiance, juſtice, truth,
Humanity itſelf, beneath thy feet?
Thou know'ſt thou haſt—I could, to thy confuſion,
Return thy hard reproaches; but I ſpare thee
Before this lord, for whoſe ill-ſorted friendſhip
Thou haſt moſt baſely ſacrific'd thy daughter.
Farewel, my lord!—For thee, lord conſtable,
Who doſt preſume to lift thy ſurly eye
To my ſoft love, my gentle *Sigiſmunda*,
I once again command thee, on thy life—
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
No further urge thy arrogant pretenſions!

SCENE V.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND.

Oſm. Ha! arrogant pretenſions! heaven and earth!
What! arrogant pretenſions to my wife?
My wedded wife! Where are we? In a land
Of civil rule, of liberty and laws?——
Not on my life purſue them?—Giddy prince!
My life diſdains thy nod. It is the gift
Of parent heaven, who gave me too an arm,

A ſpirit

A ſpirit to defend it againſt tyrants.
The *Norman* race, the ſons of mighty *Rollo*,
Who ruſhiug in a tempeſt from the north,
Great nurſe of generous freemen! bravely won
With their own ſwords their ſeats, and ſtill poſſeſs them
By the ſame noble tenure, are not us'd
To hear ſuch language—If I now deſiſt,
Then brand me for a coward, deem me villain!
A traitor to the public! by this conduct
Deceiv'd, betray'd, inſulted, tyranniz'd.
Mine is a common cauſe. My arm ſhall guard,
Mix'd with my own, the rights of each *Sicilian*,
Of ſocial life, and of mankind in general.
Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
I ſhall find means to ſhake thy tottering throne,
Which this illegal, this perfidious uſage
Forfeits at once, and cruſh thee in the ruins!—
Conſtantia is my queen!

Siff. Lord conſtable,
Let us be ſtedfaſt in the right; but let us
Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
As well as manly firmneſs. True, I own,
Th' indignities you ſuffer are ſo high,
As might even juſtify what now you threaten.
But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes,
The cruel horrors of inteſtine war,
Yet hold untouch'd our liberties and laws;
O let us, rais'd above the turbid ſphere
Of little ſelfiſh paſſions, nobly do it!
Nor to our hot intemperate pride pour out
A dire libation of *Sicilian* blood.
'Tis godlike magnanimity, to keep,
When moſt provok'd, our reaſon calm and clear,

And execute her will, from a ſtrong ſenſe
Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
Of heat and paſſion, which, tho' honeſt, bear us
Often too far. Remember that my houſe
Protects my daughter ſtill; and ere I ſaw her
Thus raviſh'd from us by the arm of power,
This hand ſhould act the *Roman* father's part.
Fear not; be temperate; all will yet be well.
I know the king. At firſt his paſſions burſt
Quick as the light'ning's flaſh: but in his breaſt
Honour and juſtice dwell.—Truſt me, to reaſon
He will return.

Oſm. He will!—By heavens, he ſhall!—
You know the king!—I wiſh, my lord *Siffredi*,
That you had deign'd to tell me all you knew——
And would you have me wait, with duteous patience,
Till he return to reaſon? Ye juſt powers!
When he has planted on our necks his foot,
And trod us into ſlaves; when his vain pride
Is cloy'd with our ſubmiſſion; if, at laſt,
He finds his arm too weak to ſhake the frame
Of wide-eſtabliſh'd order out of joint,
And overturn all juſtice; then, perchance,
He, in a fit of ſickly kind repentance,
May make a merit to return to reaſon.
No, no, my lord!——There is a nobler way,
To teach the blind oppreſſive *Fury* reaſon:
Oft has the luſtre of avenging ſteel
Unſeal'd her ſtupid eyes—The ſword is reaſon!

SCENE VI.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, RODOLPHO, *with guards.*

Rod. My lord high-conſtable of *Sicily*,

In

In the king's name, and by his ſpecial order,
I here arreſt you priſoner of ſtate.

Oſm. What king? I know no king of *Sicily*——
Unleſs he be the huſband of *Conſtantia.*

Rod. Then know him now—Behold his royal orders
To bear you to the caſtle of *Palermo.*

Siff. Let the big torrent foam its madneſs off.
Submit, my lord—No caſtle long can hold
Our wrongs—This, more than friendſhip or alliance,
Confirms me thine; this binds me to thy fortunes,
By the ſtrong tie of common injury,
Which nothing can diſſolve—I grieve, *Rodolpho,*
To ſee the reign in ſuch unhappy ſort
Begin.

Oſm. The reign! the uſurpation call it!
This meteor-king may blaze a while, but ſoon
Muſt ſpend his idle terrors—Sir, lead on—
Farewel, my lord---More than my life and fortune,
Remember well, is in your hands——my honour!

Siff. Our honour is the ſame. My ſon, farewel---
We ſhall not long be parted.—On theſe eyes
Sleep ſhall not ſhed his balm, till I behold thee
Reſtor'd to freedom, or partake thy bonds.
Even noble courage is not void of blame,
Till nobler patience ſanctifies its flame.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SIFFREDI *alone.*

THE proſpect lowrs around. I found the king,
Tho' calm'd a little, with ſubſiding tempeſt,
As ſuits his generous nature, yet in love

Abated

Abated nought, moſt ardent in his purpoſe;
Inexorably fix'd, whate'er the riſque,
To claim my daughter, and diſſolve this marriage----
I have embark'd, upon a perilous ſea,
A mighty treaſure. Here the rapid youth,
Th' impetuous paſſions of a lover-king
Check my bold courſe; and there the jealous pride,
Th' impatient honour of a haughty lord
Of the firſt rank, in intereſt and dependants
Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
My honour too, the ſame unchang'd conviction,
That theſe my meaſures were, and ſtill remain
Of abſolute neceſſity, to ſave
The land from civil fury, urge me on.
But how proceed? I only faſter ruſh
Upon the deſperate evils I would ſhun.
Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
And harſh unnatural force are not the means
Of public welfare or of private bliſs———
Bear witneſs, Heaven! Thou mind-inſpecting eye!
My breaſt is pure. I have prefer'd my duty,
The good and ſafety of my fellow-ſubjects,
To all thoſe views that fire the ſelfiſh race
Of men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to SIFFREDI.

Off. My lord, a man of noble port, his face
Wrap'd in diſguiſe, is earneſt for admiſſion.

Siff. Go, bid him enter. [*Officer goes out.*]
Ha! wrap'd in diſguiſe!
And at this late unſeaſonable hour!
When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
By the dire gloom of raging tempeſt doubled.———

SCENE

SCENE II.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, *diſcovering himſelf.*

Siff. What! ha! earl *Oſmond*, you?—Welcome, once more,
To this glad roof!—But why in this diſguiſe?
Would I could hope the king exceeds his promiſe!
I have his faith, ſoon as to-morrow's ſun,
Shall gild *Sicilia*'s cliffs, you ſhall be free.——
Has ſome good angel turn'd his heart to juſtice?
Oſm. It is not by the favour of count *Tancred*
That I am here. As much I ſcorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats———
Our friend *Goffredo*, who commands the caſtle,
On my parole, ere dawn to render back
My perſon, has permitted me this freedom.
Know then; the faithleſs outrage of to day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has rouz'd *Conſtantia*'s court. Our friends, the friends
Of virtue, juſtice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
This, this, they ſay, exceeds whate'er deform'd
The miſerable days we ſaw beneath
William the bad. This ſaps the ſolid baſe,
At once of government and private life;
This ſhameleſs impoſition on the faith,
The majeſty of ſenates, this leud inſult,
This violation of the rights of men.
Added to theſe, his ignominious treatment
Of her th' illuſtrious offspring of our kings,
Sicilia's hope, and now our royal miſtreſs.
You know, my lord, how groſsly theſe infringe
The late king's will; which orders, if count *Tancred*
Make

Make not *Conſtantia* partner of his throne,
That he be quite excluded the ſucceſſion,
And ſhe to *Henry* given, king of the *Romans*,
The potent emperor *Barbaroſſa*'s ſon,
Who ſeeks with earneſt inſtance her alliance.
I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this Will to you entruſted,
Deſire, nay more, demand, your inſtant aid,
To ſee it put in vigorous execution.

Siff. You cannot doubt, my lord, of my concurrence.
Who more than I have labour'd this great point?
'Tis my own plan. And, if I drop it now,
I ſhould be juſtly branded with the ſhame
Of raſh advice or deſpicable weakneſs.
But let us not precipitate the matter.
Conſtantia's friends are numerous and ſtrong;
Yet *Tancred*'s, truſt me, are of equal force.
E'er ſince the ſecret of his birth was known,
The people all are in a tumult hurl'd
Of boundleſs joy, to hear there lives a prince
Of mighty *Guiſcard*'s line. Numbers, beſides,
Of powerful barons, who at heart had pined,
To ſee the reign of their renown'd forefathers,
Won by immortal deeds of matchleſs valour,
Paſs from the gallant *Normans* to the *Suevi*,
Will, with a kind of rage, eſpouſe his cauſe——
'Tis ſo, my lord—be not by paſſion blinded——
'Tis ſurely ſo——O if our prating virtue
Dwells not in words alone——O let us join,
'My generous *Oſmond*, to avert theſe woes,
And yet ſuſtain our tottering *Norman* kingdom?

Oſm. But how, *Siffredi?* how?—If by ſoft means
We can maintain our rights, and ſave our country,
May his unnatural blood firſt ſtain the ſword,

Who

Who with unpitying fury firſt ſhall draw it!

Siff. I have a thought—The glorious work be thine.
But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
Above the paſſions of the vulgar breaſt,
And thence from thee I hope it, noble *Oſmond*—
Suppoſe my daughter, to her God devoted,
Were plac'd within ſome convent's ſacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection, of the altar——

Oſm. Ere then, by heavens! I would devoutly ſhave
My holy ſcalp, turn whining monk myſelf,
And pray inceſſant for the tyrant's ſafety!——
What! How! becauſe an inſolent invader,
A ſacrilegious tyrant, in contempt
Of all thoſe nobleſt rights, which to maintain
Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife;
That I ſhall thus betray the common cauſe
Of human kind, and tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner you propoſe—O then
I were ſupremely vile! degraded! ſhamed!
The ſcorn of manhood! and abhor'd of honour!

Siff. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
Of reaſon, of humanity and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious demon,
That ſingly minds itſelf, and oft embroils
With proud barbarian niceties the world!

Oſm. My lord, my lord!——I cannot brook your
prudence————
It holds a pulſe unequal to my blood————
Unblemiſh'd honour is the flower of virtue!
The vivifying ſoul! and he who ſlights it
Will leave the other dull and lifeleſs droſs.

Siff. No more——you are too warm.

Oſm. You

Osm. You are too cool,

Siff. Too cool, my lord? I were indeed too cool,
Not to resent this language, and to tell thee——
I wish earl *Osmond* were as cool as I
To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
To that of others—But of this no more———
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will against all force maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirl'd in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risque the dire means of war—The king to-morrow
Will set you free; and, if by gentle means
He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
And wed *Constantia*, as the Will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice———
Let that suffice.

Osm. It does—Forgive my heat.
My rankled mind, by injuries inflam'd,
May be too prompt to take and give offence.

Siff. 'Tis pass'd—Your wrongs, I own, may well transport
The wisest mind—But henceforth, noble *Osmond*,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion—
These jars apart—You may repose your soul
On my firm faith and unremitting friendship,
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see shall prove it further—
Return, my son, and from your friend *Goffredo*
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.

Osm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north———

But

But your frail age, by care and toil exhauſted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing reſt.

Siff. Soon as to-morrow's dawn ſhall ſtreak the ſkies,
I, with my friends in ſolemn ſtate aſſembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom:
Then by calm reaſon, or by higher means,
The king ſhall quit his claim, and in the face
Of *Sicily*, my daughter ſhall be yours.
Farewel.

Oſm. My lord, good night.

SCENE III.

OSMOND *alone.* [*After a long pauſe.*]

I like him not———
Yes—I have mighty matter of ſuſpicion.
'Tis plain—I ſee it lurking in his breaſt,
He has a fooliſh fondneſs for this king———
My honour is not ſafe, while here my wife
Remains—Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to ſome convent, as he mention'd—
The king too—tho' I ſmother'd up my rage,
I mark'd it well——will ſet me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? He has ſome dark deſign—
By heavens! he has—I am abus'd moſt groſsly;
Made the vile tool of this old ſtateſman ſcheme;
Marry'd to one—ay, and he knew it—one
Who loves young *Tancred!* Hence her ſwooning, tears,
And all her ſoft diſtreſs, when ſhe diſgrac'd me
By baſely giving her perfidious hand
Without her heart—Hell and perdition! this,
This is the perfidy!—This is the fell,
The keen, envenom'd, exquiſite diſgrace!
Which to a man of honour even exceeds

The

The falſhood of the perſon—But I now
Will rouze me from the poor tame lethargy,
By my believing fondneſs caſt upon me.
I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
Has promis'd to purſue. No! ere his eyes
Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
I will convince him that earl *Oſmond* never
Was form'd to be his dupe—I know full well
Th' important weight and danger of the deed:
But to a man, whom greater dangers preſs,
Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
Raſhneſs itſelf, and utter deſperation,
Are the beſt prudence—I will bear her off
This night, and lodge her in a place of ſafety.
I have a truſty band that waits not far.
Hence! let me loſe no time—One rapid moment
Should ardent form, at once, and execute
A bold deſign—'Tis fix'd—'Tis done!—Yes, then,
When I have ſeiz'd the prize of love and honour,
And with a friend ſecur'd her; to the caſtle
I will repair, and claim *Goffredo*'s promiſe
To riſe with all his garriſon—my friends
With brave impatience wait. The mine is laid,
And only wants my kindling touch to ſpring.

SCENE IV.

SIGISMUNDA'S *Apartment.*

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Laur. Heavens! 'tis a fearful night!
Sigiſ. Ah! the black rage
Of midnight tempeſt, or th' aſſuring ſmiles
Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.

Nought

Nought now has charms or terrors to my breaſt,
The ſeat of ſtupid woe!—Leave me, my *Laura*.
Kind reſt, perhaps, may huſh my woes a little—
Oh for that quiet ſleep that knows no morning!

Laur. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondneſs—Let me watch a while
By your ſad bed, till theſe dread hours ſhall paſs.

Sigiſ. Alas! what is the toil of elements,
This idle perturbation of the ſky,
To what I feel within!—Oh that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my deareſt *Laura!*

Laur. Oh I know not
What this oppreſſion means—but 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can perſuade myſelf to leave you—
Well then—Good night, my deareſt *Sigiſmunda!*

SCENE V.

SIGISMUNDA.

And am I then alone?—The moſt undone,
Moſt wretched being new beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world!—
I ſaid I did not fear—Ah me! I feel
A ſhivering horror, run thro' all my powers!
O I am nought but tumult, fears and weakneſs!
And yet how idle fear, when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—O thou gentle ſcene
[*Looking towards her bed.*]
Of ſweet repoſe, where by th' oblivious draught
Of each ſad toilſome day, to peace reſtor'd
Unhappy mortals loſe their woes a-while,
Thou haſt no peace for me!—What ſhall I do?
How paſs this dreadful night, ſo big with terror?——

Here,

Here. with the midnight ſhades, here will I ſit,
[*Sitting down.*]
A prey to dire deſpair, and ceaſeleſs weep
The hours away—Bleſs me!—I heard a noiſe——
[*Starting up.*]
No---I miſtook—Nothing but ſilence reigns
And awful midnight round---Again!---O heavens!
My lord the king!

SCENE VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. Be not alarm'd, my love!
Sigiſ. My royal lord! why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?
Tanc. By that ſecret way
My love contriv'd, when we, in happier days,
Us'd to devote theſe hours, ſo much in vain,
To vows of love and everlaſting friendſhip.
Sigiſ. Why will you thus perſiſt to add new ſtings
To her diſtreſs, who never can be thine?
O fly me! fly? You know——
Tanc. I know too much.
O how I could reproach thee, *Sigiſmunda!*
Pour out my injur'd ſoul in juſt complaints!
But now the time permits not, theſe ſwift moments---
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forc'd me to ſeem perfidious in thine eyes.
Ah, fatal blindneſs! not to have obſerv'd
The mingled pangs of rage and love that ſhook me;
When, by my cruel public ſituation
Compell'd, I only feign'd conſent, to gain
A little time, and more ſecure thee mine.
E'er ſince---A dreadful interval of care!——

My

My thoughts have been employ'd, not without hope,
How to defeat *Siffredi*'s barbarous purpoſe.
But thy credulity has ruin'd all,
Thy raſh, thy wild—I know not what to name it—
Oh it has prov'd the giddy hopes of man
To be deluſion all, and ſickening folly!
Sigiſ. Ah, generous *Tancred!* ah thy truth deſtroys me!
Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am falſe!
My haſty rage, join'd to my tame ſubmiſſion,
More than the moſt exalted filial duty
Could e'er demand, has daſh'd our cup of fate
With bitterneſs unequal'd—But, alas!
What are thy woes to mine?—to mine! juſt heaven!—
Now is thy turn of vengeance—hate, renounce me!
O leave me to the fate I well deſerve,
To ſink in hopeleſs miſery!—at leaſt,
Try to forget the worthleſs *Sigiſmunda!*
Tanc. Forget thee!—No! Thou art my ſoul itſelf!
I have no thought, no hope, no wiſh, but thee!
Even this repented injury, the fears,
That rouſe me all to madneſs, at the thought
Of loſing thee, the whole collected pains
Of my full heart, ſerve but to make thee dearer!
Ah, how forget thee!—Much muſt be forgot,
Ere *Tancred* can forget his *Sigiſmunda!*
Sigiſ. But you, my lord, muſt make that great effort.
Tanc. Can *Sigiſmunda* make it?
Sigiſ. Ah! I know not
With what ſucceſs——But all that feeble woman,
And love-entangled reaſon can perform,
I, to the utmoſt, will exert to do it.
Tanc. Fear not—'Tis done!—If thou canſt form the thought,

Succeſs is ſure—I am forgot already!
Sigiſ. Ah, *Tancred!* —But, my lord, reſpect me more.
Think who I am—What can you now propoſe?
Tanc. To claim the plighted vows which heaven has heard,
To vindicate the rights of holy love,
By faith and honour bound, to which compar'd
Theſe empty forms, which have enſnar'd thy hand,
Are impious guile, abuſe, and profanation——
Nay, as a king, whoſe high prerogative
By this unlicens'd marriage is affronted,
To bid the laws themſelves pronounce it void.
Sigiſ. Honour, my lord, is much too proud to catch
At every ſlender twig of nice diſtinctions.
Theſe for th' unfeeling vulgar may do well:
But thoſe, whoſe ſouls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy nobly ſway'd,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.
Then ceaſe to urge me—Since I am not born
To that exalted fate to be your queen——
Or, yet a dearer name—to be your wife!———
I am the wife of an illuſtrious lord
Of your own princely blood; and what I am,
I will with proper dignity remain.
Retire, my royal lord—There is no means
To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
We meet no more!
Tanc. Oh barbarous *Sigiſmunda!*
And canſt thou talk thus ſteadily? thus treat me
With ſuch unpitying, unrelenting rigor?
Poor is the love, that rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity, can bear to ſee
The man, whoſe heart was once ſo dear to thine,

By

By many a tender vow ſo mix'd together,
A prey to anguiſh, fury and diſtraction!—
Thou canſt not ſurely make me ſuch a wretch,
Thou canſt not, *Sigiſmunda!* Yet relent,
O ſave us yet!—*Rodolpho*, with my guards,
Waits in the garden—Let us ſeize the moments
We ne'er may have again—With more than power
I will aſſert thee mine, with faireſt honour.
The world ſhall even approve; each honeſt boſom
Swell with a kindred joy to ſee us happy.

Sigiſ. The world approve!--What is the world to me?
The conſcious mind is its own awful world.—
And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
I know not, *Tancred*, what I might have done.
Then, then my conduct, ſanctify'd by love,
Could not be deem'd, by the ſevereſt judge,
The mean effect of intereſt or ambition.
But now, not all my partial heart can plead,
Shall ever ſhake th' unalterable dictates
That tyrannize my breaſt.

Tanc. 'Tis well—No more—
I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman!
Since thy barbarian heart is ſteel'd by pride,
Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
Caſt on the ground, a vile and abject wretch!
Loſt to all cares, all dignities, all duties!
Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful ſoul,
Here, at thy feet—Death, death alone ſhall part us!

Sigiſ. Have you then vow'd to drive me to perdition?
What can I more?—Yes, *Tancred!* once again
I will forget the dignity my ſtation
Commands me to ſuſtain—for the laſt time
Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,
Can ever root thee from my hapleſs boſom.

O leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!—
To ſee what once we tenderly have lov'd,
Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever!
Is pain thy generoſity ſhould ſpare me.
Then riſe, my lord; and if you truly love me;
If you reſpect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for tho' th' emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it ſo, they pierce it with ſuch anguiſh—
Oh 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

SCENE VII.

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Oſm. [*entering.*] Turn, tyrant! turn! and anſwer to my honour,
For this thy baſe unſufferable outrage!
Tanc. Inſolent traitor! think not to eſcape
Thyſelf my vengeance! [*They fight.* Oſmond *falls.*]
Sigiſ. Help here! Help!—O heavens!
[*Throwing herſelf down by him.*]
Alas! my lord, what meant your headlong rage?
That faith, which I, this day, upon the altar
To you devoted, is unblemiſh'd, pure,
As veſtal truth; was reſolutely yours,
Beyond the power of aught on earth to ſhake it.
Oſm. Perfidious woman! die!———
[*Shortening his ſword, he plunges it into her breaſt.*]
And to the grave
Attend a huſband, yet but half aveng'd!
Tanc. O horror! horror! execrable villain!
Oſm. And, tyrant! thou!—Thou ſhalt not o'er my tomb
Exult—'Tis well!—'Tis great!—I die content.-[*Dies.*]

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Tanc. [*Throwing himſelf down by* Sigiſmunda.]
Quick! here! bring aid!—All in *Palermo* bring
Whoſe ſkill can ſave her!—Ah! that gentle boſom
Pours faſt the ſtreams of life.
Sigiſ. All aid is vain,
I feel the powerful hand of death upon me——
But, oh! it ſheds a ſweetneſs thro' my fate,
That I am thine again; and, without blame,
May in my *Tancred*'s arms reſign my ſoul!
Tanc. Oh, death is in that voice! ſo gently mild,
So ſadly ſweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel fates have join'd us?
Are theſe the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours? Is virtue thus rewarded?
Let not my impious rage accuſe juſt heaven!
Thou, *Tancred!* thou! haſt murder'd *Sigiſmunda!*
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cauſe!—But I will do thee juſtice
On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wiſdom
Refus'd an ear—Yes, death ſhall ſoon unite us!
Sigiſ. Live, live, my *Tancred!*—Let my death ſuffice
To expiate all that may have been amiſs.
May it appeaſe the fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign! Mean-time, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
To guard our friends, and make thy people happy—
[*Obſerving* Siffredi *fixt in aſtoniſhment and grief.*]
My father!——Oh! how ſhall I lift my eyes

To thee, my ſinking father!
Siff. Awful heaven!
I am chaſtis'd!——My deareſt child!——
Sigiſ. Where am I?
A fearful darkneſs cloſes all around———
My friends! we needs muſt part—I muſt obey
Th' imperious call—Farewell, my *Laura!* cheriſh
My poor afflicted father's age—*Rodolpho*,
Now is the time to watch th' unhappy king,
With all the care and tenderneſs of friendſhip—
Oh my dear father! bow'd beneath the weight
Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
Receive my laſt adieu!—Where art thou, *Tancred?*
Give me thy hand—But ah! it cannot ſave me
From the dire king of terrors, whoſe cold power
Creeps o'er my heart—Oh!
Tanc. How theſe pangs diſtract me;
O lift thy gracious eyes!—Thou leav'ſt me then!
Thou leav'ſt me, *Sigiſmunda!*
Sigiſ. Yet a moment———
I had, my *Tancred*, ſomething more to ſay—
Yes—but thy love and tenderneſs for me
Sure makes it needleſs—Harbour no reſentment
Againſt my father; venerate his zeal,
That acted from a principle of goodneſs,
From faithful love to thee—Live and maintain
My innocence imbalm'd, with holieſt care
Preſerve my ſpotleſs memory!—I die—
ETERNAL MERCY take my trembling ſoul!
Oh! 'tis the only ſting of death to part
From theſe we love—from thee--farewel, my *Tancred!*
[*Dies.*]

Tanc. Thus then!
[*Flying to his ſword is held by* Rodolpho.]
Rod. Hold

Rod. Hold! hold! my lord!—Have you forgot
Your *Sigiſmunda*'s laſt requeſt already?
Tanc. Off! ſet me free! Think not to bind me down,
With barbarous friendſhip, to the rack of life!
What hand can ſhut the thouſand, thouſand gates,
Which death ſtill opens to the woes of mortals?—
I ſhall find means—No power in earth or heaven
Can force me to endure the hateful light,
Thus robb'd of all that lent it joy and ſweetneſs!
Off! traitors! off! or my diſtracted ſoul
Will burſt indignant from this jail of nature,
To where ſhe beckons yonder—No, mild ſeraph!
Point not to life—I cannot linger here,
Cut off from thee, the miſerable pity,
The ſcorn of human kind!———A trampled king!
Who let his mean poor-hearted love, one moment,
To coward prudence ſtoop; who made it not
The firſt undoubting action of his reign,
To ſnatch thee to his throne, and there to ſhield thee,
Thy helpleſs boſom from a ruffian's fury!———
O ſhame! O agony! O the fell ſtings
Of late, of vain repentance!———Ha! my brain
Is all on fire! a wild abyſs of thought!———
Th'infernal world diſcloſes! See! behold him!
Lo! with fierce ſmiles he ſhakes the bloody ſteel,
And mocks my feeble tears---Hence! quickly! hence!
Spurn his vile carcaſe! give it to the dogs!
Expoſe it to the winds and ſcreaming ravens!
Or hurl it down that fiery ſteep to hell,
There with his ſoul to toſs in flames for ever!———
Ah, impotence of rage!---What am I? --Where?
Sad, ſilent, all?——The forms of dumb deſpair,
Around ſome mournful tomb!---What do I ſee?
This ſoft abode of innocence and love

Turn'd to the houſe of death! a place of horror!---
Ah! that poor corſe! pale! pale! deform'd with murder?
Is that my *Sigiſmunda!*

[*Throwing himſelf down by her.*]

SIFFREDI.

[*After a pathetic pauſe, looking on the ſcene before him.*]

Have I liv'd
To theſe enfeebled years, by heaven reſerv'd,
To be a dreadful monument of juſtice?——
Rodolpho, raiſe the king, and bear him hence
From this diſtracting ſcene of blood and death.
Alas! I dare not give him my aſſiſtance;
My care would only more enflame his rage.
Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
That by rude force the paſſions would command,
That ruthleſs ſought to root them from the breaſt;
They may be rul'd, but will not be oppreſt.
Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature ſtray,
And the great ties of ſocial life betray;
Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part:
'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.
Ye vainly wiſe, who o'er mankind preſide,
Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride!
Keep virtue's ſimple path before your eyes,
Nor think from evil good can ever riſe.

END *of the* FIFTH ACT.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Miſs BUDGELL.

CRamm'd to the Throat with wholeſome moral Stuff,
Alas! poor Audience! you have had enough.
Was ever hapleſs Heroine of a Play
In ſuch a piteous Plight as ours To-day?
Was ever Woman ſo by Love betray'd?
Match'd with two Huſbands, and yet——die a Maid,
But bleſs me!—hold—What Sounds are theſe I hear!—
I ſee the TRAGIC MUSE herſelf appear.

The Back Scene opens, and diſcovers a romantic Silvan Landſkip; from which Mrs. CIBBER, in the Character of the TRAGIC MUSE, advances ſlowly to Muſic, and ſpeaks the following Lines.

Hence with your flippant Epilogue, that tries
To wipe the virtuous Tear from BRITISH *Eyes;*
That dares my moral Tragic Scene profane,
With Strains—at beſt, unſuiting, light and vain.
Hence from the pure unſully'd Beams that play
In yon fair Eyes, where Virtue ſhines—Away!
BRITONS, *to you from chaſte* Caſtalian *Groves,*
Where dwell the tender, oft unhappy, Loves;
Where Shades of Heroes roam, each mighty Name,
And court my Aid to riſe again to Fame;
To you I come, to Freedom's nobleſt Seat,
And in BRITANNIA *fix my laſt Retreat.*
In Greece *and* Rome, *I watch'd the Public Weal;*
The purpled Tyrant trembled at my Steel:

EPILOGUE.

Nor did I leſs o'er private ſorrows reign,
And mend the melting Heart with ſofter Pain.
On France *and* You *then roſe my bright'ning Star,*
With ſocial Ray—The ARTS *are ne'er at War.*
O, as your Fire and Genius ſtronger blaze,
As yours are generous Freedom's bolder Lays,
Let not the Gallic *Taſte leave yours behind,*
In decent Manners and in Life refin'd;
Baniſh the motley Mode, to tag low Verſe,
The laughing Ballad to the mournful Hearſe.
When thro' five Acts your Hearts have learnt to glow,
Touch'd with the ſacred Force of honeſt Woe;
O keep the dear Impreſſion on your Breaſt,
Nor idly loſe it for a wretched Jeſt!

CORIOLANUS.

A

TRAGEDY.

PROLOGUE.

Written by the Hon. GEORGE LYTTLETON, Eſq;

Spoken by Mr. QUIN.

I Come not here your candor to implore
For ſcenes, whoſe author is, alas! no more;
He wants no advocate his cauſe to plead;
You will yourſelves be patrons of the dead.
No party his benevolence confin'd,
No ſect——alike it flow'd to all mankind.
He lov'd his friends (forgive this guſhing tear:
Alas! I feel I am no actor here)
He lov'd his friends with ſuch a warmth of heart,
So clear of int'reſt, ſo devoid of art,
Such generous freedom, ſuch unſhaken zeal,
No words can ſpeak it, but our tears may tell.——
O candid truth! O faith without a ſtain!
O manners gently firm, and nobly plain!
O ſympathizing love of others bliſs!
Where will you find another breaſt like his?
Such was the man---the poet well you know:
Oft has he touch'd your hearts with tender woe:
Oft in this crouded houſe, with juſt applauſe
You heard him teach fair virtue's pureſt laws;
For his chaſte muſe employ'd her heav'n-taught lyre
None but the nobleſt paſſions to inſpire,
Not one immoral, one corrupted thought,
One line, which dying he could wiſh to blot.
Oh, may to-night your favourable doom
Another laurel add to grace his tomb:
Whilſt he, ſuperior now to praiſe or blame,
Hears not the feeble voice of human fame.
Yet if to thoſe whom moſt on earth he lov'd,
From whom his pious care is now remov'd,
With whom his liberal hand, and bounteous heart,
Shared all his little fortune could impart:
If to thoſe friends your kind regard ſhall give
What they no longer can from his receive,
That, that, even now, above yon ſtarry pole,
May touch with pleaſure his immortal ſoul.

The PERSONS.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS.	Mr. Quin.
ATTIUS TULLUS, general of the *Volſcian* army.	Mr. Ryan.
GALESUS, one of the deputies of the *Volſcian* ſtates attending the camp.	Mr. Delane.
The other deputies of the *Volſcian* ſtates.	
VOLUSIUS, one of the principal *Volſcian* officers.	Mr. Sparks.
TITUS, freed-man of GALESUS.	Mr. Ridout.
MARCUS MINUCIUS, conſul and principal of the deputation from *Rome* to CORIOLANUS.	Mr. Bridgwater.
POSTHUMUS COMINIUS, a conſular ſenator, one of the deputation, and who had been the *Roman* general at the taking of *Corioli*.	Mr. Anderſon.
VETURIA, mother of CORIOLANUS.	Mrs. Woffington.
VOLUMNIA, wife of CORIOLANUS.	Miſs Bellamy.

Roman ſenators, prieſts, augurs, *&c.* of the firſt deputation. *Roman* ladies, in the train of VETURIA and VOLUMNIA, of the ſecond deputation.

Volſcian OFFICERS, LICTORS, SOLDIERS, *&c.*

SCENE, The *Volſcian* Camp.

CORIOLANUS.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Volſcian *Camp.*

ATTIUS TULLUS, VOLUSIUS.

VOLUSIUS.

WHENCE is it, *Tullus*, that our arms are ſtopt
Here on the borders of the *Roman* ſtate?
Why ſleeps that ſpirit, whoſe heroic ardor
Urg'd you to break the truce, and pour'd our hoſt,
From all th' united cantons of the *Volſci*,
On their unguarded frontier? Such deſigns
Brook not an hour's delay; their whole ſucceſs
Depends on inſtant, vigorous execution.

Tul. Voluſius, I approve thy brave impatience;
And will to thee, in confidence of friendſhip,
Diſcloſe my ſecret ſoul. Thou know'ſt *Galeſus*,
Whoſe freedom *Caius Marcius*, once his gueſt,
Of all the ſpoil of ſack'd *Corioli*,
Alone demanded; and who thence to *Rome*,
From gratitude and friendſhip, follow'd *Marcius*;
Whence lately to our *Antium* he return'd,
With overtures of peace propos'd by *Rome*.

Vol. I know him well; an antiquated ſage

Of

Of that romantic ſchool *Pythagoras*
Eſtabliſh'd here on our *Heſperian* ſhore;
Whoſe gentle dictates only ſerve to tame
Enfeebled mortals into ſlaves.
Tul. Galeſus,
Doubtleſs, poſſeſſes many civil virtues;
Is gentle, good; for rectitude of heart,
And innocence of life, by all rever'd.
Vol. Pardon me, *Tullus*, if my faithful bluntleſs
Deems you too lib'ral in his praiſe. In peace
Such may perhaps do well, when prating rules
An idle world; but in tempeſtuous times
They are ſtark naught, theſe viſionary ſtateſmen,
Fit rulers only for their golden age.
The rugged genius of rapacious *Rome*
For other men, and other councils, calls.
Tul. Your thoughts are mine---I only meant to tell thee
The part he bears in this ill-tim'd delay.
Soon as our gather'd army march'd from *Antium*,
The *Roman* ſenate, whoſe attentive caution
Watch'd all our motions, took at once th' alarm;
And ſent a herald, ere we paſt their borders,
With formal ceremony, to demand
The cauſe of our approach.---Had I been maſter,
I would have anſwer'd at the gates of *Rome*.
But this *Galeſus*, who attends our camp
Among the *Volſcian* deputies, ſo pleaded
The laws of nations, made ſuch loud complaints
Againſt th' infraction of the public faith,
So teaz'd us with the pedantry of ſtates,
That I was forc'd, unwilling, to permit
His freedman *Titus*, to be ſent to *Rome*
With our demands. If theſe the ſenate grants,

We

We then are in the toils of peace entangled,
In ſpite of all my efforts to avoid them.
Vol. O 'tis a wild chimera! Peace with *Rome!*
Dream not of that, unleſs the *Volſcian* courage
Is quite ſubdu'd, and only ſeeks to gild
A vile ſubmiſſion with that ſpecious name.
Learn wiſdom from your neighbours. Peace with *Rome*
Has quell'd the *Latines*, tamed their freeborn ſpirit,
And by her friendſhip honour'd them with chains.
Tul. She ne'er will grant it on the juſt conditions
I now have brought the *Volſci* to demand:
The reſtitution of our conquer'd cities,
And fair alliance upon equal terms.
I know the *Roman* inſolence will ſcorn
To yield to this: and *Titus* muſt return
Within three days, the longeſt term allow'd him;
Of which the third is near elaps'd already.
Then even *Galeſus* will not dare to ſtop us
With ſuperſtitious forms, and ſolemn trifles,
From letting looſe th' unbridled rage of war
Againſt thoſe hated tyrants of *Heſperia.*
Vol. Thanks to the Gods! my ſword will then be free.
Then, poor *Corioli!* thy bleeding wounds,
Thy treaſures ſack'd, thy captivated matrons,
Shall amply be reveng'd by thy *Voluſius:*
Then, *Tullus*, from the lofty brows of *Marcius*
Thou may'ſt regain the wreaths his conquering hand,
By partial fortune aided, tore from thine.
Tul. O my *Voluſius!* thou, who art a ſoldier,
A try'd and brave one too, ſay, in thy heart
Doſt thou not ſcorn me? thou, who ſaw'ſt me bend
Beneath the half-ſpent thunder of a foe,
Warm from the conqueſt of *Corioli*,
Which, ruſhing furious in with thoſe, whoſe ſally

He

He had repell'd, he ſeiz'd almoſt alone;
And gave to fire and ſword. Yet thence he flew,
Scorning the plunder of our richeſt city,
His wounds undreſt, without a moment's reſpite
To where our armies on the fearful edge
Of battle ſtood; and aſking of the conſul
To be oppos'd to me, with mighty rage,
Reſiſtleſs, bore us down.

Vol. True valor, *Tullus*,
Lyes in the mind, the never-yielding purpoſe,
Nor owns the blind award of giddy fortune.

Tul. My ſoul, my friend, my ſoul is all on fire!
Thirſt of revenge conſumes me! the revenge
Of generous emulation, not of hatred.
This happy *Roman*, this proud *Marcius*, haunts me.
Each troubled night, when ſlaves and captives ſleep,
Forgetful of their chains, I, in my dreams,
Anew am vanquiſh'd; and, beneath the ſword
With horror ſinking, feel a tenfold death,
The death of honour. But I will redeem---
Yes, *Marcius*, I will yet redeem my fame.
To face thee once again is the great purpoſe
For which alone I live.---Till then how ſlow,
How tedious lags the time! while ſhame corrodes me,
With many a bitter thought; and injur'd honour
Sick, and deſponding, preys upon itſelf.

Vol. It faſt approaches now, the hour of vengeance,
To this famed land, to antient *Latium* due.
Unbalanc'd *Rome*, at variance with herſelf,
To order loſt, in deep and hot commotion,
Stands on the dangerous point of civil war;
Her haughty nobles and ſeditious commons
Reviling, fearing, hating one another:

While,

While, on our part all wears a proſperous face;
Our troops united, numerous, high in ſpirit,
As if their general's ſoul inform'd them all.
O long-expected day!
Tul. Go, brave *Voluſius*,
Go breathe thy ardor into every breaſt;
That when the *Volſcian* envoy ſhall return,
Whom ere the cloſe of evening I expect,
One ſpirit may unite us in the cauſe
Of generous freedom, and our native rights,
So long oppreſs'd by *Rome*'s encroaching power.

SCENE II.

TULLUS *alone.*

Galeſus ſaid that *Marcius* ſtands for conſul.
O favour thou his ſuit, propitious *Jove!*
That I may brave him at his army's head,
In all the majeſty of ſovereign power!
That the whole conduct of the war may reſt
On us alone, and prove by its deciſion,
Which of the two is worthieſt to command.——

SCENE III.

TULLUS, OFFICER.

Tul. Ha! why this haſte? you look alarm'd.
Off. My lord,
One of exalted port, his viſage hid,
Has plac'd himſelf upon your ſacred hearth,
Beneath the dread protection of your *Lares*;
And ſits majeſtic there in ſolemn ſilence.
Tul. Did you not aſk him who, and what he was?
Off. My lord, I could not ſpeak; I felt appall'd,

As

As if the preſence of ſome God had ſtruck me.

Tul. Come, daſtard! let me find this man of terrors.

SCENE IV.

The back-ſcene opens, and diſcovers CORIOLANUS *as deſcribed above.*

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Tul. [*after ſome ſilence.*] Illuſtrious ſtranger---for thy high demeanor
Beſpeaks thee ſuch---who art thou?

Cor. [*Riſing and unmuffling his face*] View me, *Tullus*——— [*After ſome pauſe.*]
Doſt thou not know me?

Tul. No, That noble front
I never ſaw before. What is thy name?

Cor. Does not the ſecret voice of hoſtile inſtinct,
Does not thy ſwelling heart declare me to thee?

Tul. Gods! can it be?———

Cor. Yes. I am *Caius Marcius*;
Known to thy ſmarting country by the name
Of *Coriolanus.* That alone is left me,
That empty name for all my toils, my ſervice,
The blood which I have ſhed for thankleſs *Rome.*
Behold me baniſh'd thence, a victim yielded
By her weak nobles to the maddening rabble.
I ſeek revenge. Thou may'ſt employ my ſword,
With keener edge, with heavier force againſt her,
Than e'er it fell upon the *Volſcian* nation.
But if thou, *Tullus*, doſt refuſe me this,
The only wiſh of my collected heart,
Where every paſſion in one burning point
Concenters, give me death: Death from thy hand

I ſure

I ſure have well deſerv'd—Nor ſhall I bluſh
To take or life or death from *Attius Tullus.*

Tul. O *Caius Marcius!* in this one ſhort moment,
That we have friendly talk'd, my raviſh'd heart
Has undergone a great, a wonderous change.
I ever held thee in my beſt eſteem;
But this heroic confidence has won me,
Stampt me at once thy friend. I were indeed
A wretch as mean as this thy truſt is noble,
Could I refuſe thee thy demand—Yes, *Marcius!*
Thou haſt thy wiſh! take half of my command.
If that be not enough, then take the whole.
We have, my friend, a gallant force on foot,
An army, *Marcius,* fit to follow thee.
Go, lead them on, and take thy full revenge.
All ſhould unite to puniſh the ungrateful.
Ingratitude is treaſon to mankind.

Cor. [*embracing him.*] Thus, generous *Tullus,* take a ſoldier's thanks,
Who is not practis'd in the gloſs of words———
Thou friend in deed! friend to my cauſe, my quarrel!
Friend to the darling paſſion of my ſoul!
All elſe I ſet at nought!—Immortal Gods!
I am new-made, and wonder at myſelf!
A little while ago, and I was nothing;
A powerleſs reptile crawling on the earth,
Curs'd with a ſoul that reſtleſs wiſh'd to wield
The bolts of *Jove!* I dwelt in *Erebus,*
I wander'd through the hopeleſs gloom of hell,
Stung with revenge, tormented by the furies!
Now, *Tullus,* like a god, you draw me thence,
Throne me amidſt the ſkies, with tempeſt charg'd,
And put the ready thunder in my hand!

Tul. What I have promis'd, *Marcius,* I will do.

Within

Within an hour at fartheſt we expect
The freedman of *Galeſus* back from *Rome*,
Who carry'd to the ſenate our demands.
Their anſwer will, I doubt not, end the truce,
And inſtant draw our angry ſwords againſt them.
'Till then retire within my inmoſt tent,
Unknown to all but me, that when our chiefs
Meet in full council to declare for war,
I may produce thee to their wondering eyes,
As if deſcended from avenging heaven
To humble lofty *Rome*, and teach her juſtice.
Cor. To thy direction, *Tullus*, I reſign
My future life: my fate is in thy hands;
And, if I judge aright, the fate of *Rome*.

END *of the* FIRST ACT.

ACT II. SCENE I.

GALESUS, TITUS.

Gal. INDEED! my *Titus*, I had hopes that *Rome*,
Vex'd as ſhe is with her domeſtic broils,
Her frontier weak, her armies unprepar'd,
Might have comply'd with our demands, and given us
The ſame alliance granted to the *Latines*.
Tit. The ſenate ſcarce would hear the terms I offer'd;
But order'd me to bring this anſwer back:
" If firſt the *Volſci* take up arms, the *Romans*
" Will be laſt to lay them down."
Gal. Alas!
This anſwer ſeals the doom of many a wretch.
Unchain'd *Bellona* from her temple ruſhes,
With all the crimes and vices in her train.
Earth fades at her approach. To rural peace,

Fair

Fair plenty, and the ſocial joy of cities,
Soon will ſucceed rage, rapine, devaſtation,
Each cruel horror ſanctify'd by names.
O mortals! mortals! when will you, content
With nature's bounty, that in fuller flow,
Still as your labours open more its ſources,
Abundant guſhes o'er the happy world;
When will you baniſh violence, and outrage,
To dwell with beaſts of prey in woods and deſarts?

Tit. Never till *Rome* ſhall change her conquering maxims.

Gal. Her haughty ſpirit now will ſoar beyond
Its uſual pitch, upborn by *Caius Marcius.*
Stands he not for the conſulate?

Tit. He did.
But is no more a citizen of *Rome.*

Gal. What mean'ſt thou, *Titus?*

Tit. Marcius is from *Rome*
Baniſh'd for ever.

Gal. O immortal powers!
On what pretence could they to exile doom
Their wiſeſt captain, and their braveſt ſoldier?
Nor leſs renown'd for piety, for juſtice,
An uncorrupted heart, and pureſt manners.

Tit. The charge againſt him was entirely groundleſs,
What not his enemies themſelves believ'd,
Affecting of tyrannic power in *Rome.*
His real crime was only ſome hot words,
Struck from his fiery temper in the ſenate,
Againſt thoſe factious miniſters of diſcord,
The tribunes of the people. They to rage,
And frantic fury, rous'd the mad plebeians;
By whom ſupported in their bold attempt,
They durſt preſume to ſummon to the bar

Of

Of an enrag'd and partial populace,
The moſt illuſtrious ſenator of *Rome.*
To this the nobles yielded—and, with his,
Gave up their own and children's rights for ever.

Gal. O ſhameful weakneſs in a *Roman* ſenate,
So much renown'd for firmneſs! Yet, my *Titus,*
Spite of my love to *Marcius,* I muſt own it,
The vigorous ſoil whence his heroic virtues
Luxuriant riſe, if not with careful hand
Severely weeded, teems with imperfections.
His lofty ſpirit brooks no oppoſition.
His rage, if once offended, knows no bounds.
He deems plebeians, with patrician blood
Compar'd, the creatures of a lower ſpecies,
Mere menial hands by nature made to ſerve him.

Tit. It was this high patrician pride undid him.
The furious people triumph'd in his ruin,
As if they had expell'd another *Tarquin:*
While, like a captive train, the vanquiſh'd nobles
Hung their dejected heads in ſilent ſhame.
Marcius alone ſeem'd unconcern'd; tho' deep
The latent tempeſt boil'd within his breaſt,
Choak'd up and ſmother'd with exceſſive rage.

Gal. You were his gueſt at *Rome,* and therefore,
Titus,
Might on this ſad condition be permitted
To join your tears with his domeſtic friends.
Saw you that moving ſcene?

Tit. I did, *Galeſus.*
I follow'd *Marcius* home—His mother, there,
Veturia, the moſt venerable matron
Theſe eyes have e'er beheld, and ſoft *Volumnia,*
His lovely virtuous wife, amidſt his children,
Spread on the ground, lay loſt in dumb deſpair.

He

He ſwelling ſtood a while, and could not ſpeak,
Th' affronted hero ſtruggling with the man;
Then thus at laſt he broke the gloomy ſilence;
" 'Tis done. The guilty ſentence is pronounc'd.
" Ungrateful *Rome* has caſt me from her boſom.
" Support this blow with fortitude and courage,
" As it becomes two generous *Roman* matrons.
" I recommend my children to your care.
" Farewel. I go, I quit, without regret,
" A city grown an enemy to virtue."
Gal. Oh godlike *Marcius!* oh unconquer'd ſtrength
And dignity of mind! How much ſuperior
Is ſuch a ſoul to all the power of fortune!
Tit. This ſaid, he ſternly try'd to break away:
When, holding in his hand her eldeſt ſon,
Veturia follow'd; whilſt the poor *Volumnia*,
All drown'd in tears, and bearing in one arm
Their youngeſt, yet an infant, with the other
Hung clinging at his knees—he, turning to them,
Half ſoften'd, half ſevere, breath'd from his ſoul
Theſe broken accents—" Ceaſe your vain complaints.
" Mother, you have no more a ſon; and thou,
" Thou beſt of women! thou, my dear *Volumnia!*
" No more a huſband"---Pierc'd with theſe dire words
Volumnia lifeleſs ſunk: and off he flung,
With wild precipitation.
Gal. Thy ſad tale
Blinds my old eyes with tears---But whither, tell me,
O whither, *Titus*, bent he then his courſe?
Tit. Where the blind genius of regardleſs rage
And deſperation led. On to the gate,
Capena call'd, attended by the nobles,
He ſtalk'd in ſullen majeſty along;
Nor deign'd a word. A godlike virtuous anger

Beam'd thro' his features, and ſublimed his air.
With down-caſt eyes he walk'd; or, if aſide
He chanc'd to look, each look was great reproach.
Thus in emphatic ſilence, that made words
Void and inſipid all, he parted from them,
The day preceding my return from *Rome*;
Nor has been heard of ſince, loſt in th' abyſs
Of his own woes.

Gal. O *Marcius*, noble *Marcius!*
How ſhall my friendſhip ſuccour thy diſtreſs?
Where ſhall I find thee, to partake thy ſorrows,
And make myſelf companion of thy exile?
But, *Titus*, we indulge diſcourſe too long——
Go, and aſſemble thou the *Volſcian* chiefs,
Whilſt I repair to *Tullus*, to inform,
And bring him to the council, there to hear
The fatal anſwer thou haſt brought from *Rome*.

SCENE II.

Changes to TULLUS's *tent.*

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. Forgive me, *Tullus*, if I count the moments
That ſtop the purpoſe of thy noble kindneſs,
And keep me here confin'd in tame inaction.
Why lingers *Titus?*

Tul. Calm thy reſtleſs heart,
Brave *Marcius*; every minute I expect him.
Soon from the cloud that hides thee, ſhalt thou break
With double brightneſs; ſoon thy fiery rage
Shall wither all the ſtrength and pride of *Rome*.

Cor. O righteous *Jove*, protector of the injur'd!
If from my earlieſt youth, with pious awe,

I ſtill

I ſtill have reverenc'd thy all-powerful juſtice,
Still by her ſacred dictates rul'd my actions;
O let thy juſtice now ſupport my cauſe,
And arm my ſtrong right-hand with all her terrors!
When that is done, life or death be my lot,
As thy almighty pleaſure ſhall determine.

[*Enter an officer to* Tullus.]

Off. My lord, *Galeſus* aſks admittance to you.

Tul. Marcius, retire an inſtant, till I hear
The buſineſs brings him hither.—Bid him enter.

[*Exit Officer and* Coriolanus.]

[*Enter* GALESUS.]

SCENE III.

TULLUS, GALESUS.

Gal. Tullus, the *Roman* ſenate has return'd
No other anſwer to our late demands,
But abſolute denial and defiance.

Tul. It is what I expected---We ſhall teach them
An humbler language ſoon---Haſt thou aſſembled,
As I deſir'd, the *Volſcian* chiefs in council?

Gal. Titus is gone to ſummon their attendance.

Tul. It is enough---Come forth, my noble gueſt!
And ſhew *Galeſus* how the Gods aſſiſt us.

SCENE IV.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS, GALESUS.

Gal. O my aſtoniſh'd ſoul: what do I ſee?
What! *Caius Marcius! Caius Marcius* here,
Beneath one tent with *Tullus?*

Tul. Ay, and more.
With *Tullus*, now his friend and fellow-ſoldier.

Yes, thou ſhalt ſee him thundering at the head
Of *Volſcian* armies; he who oft has carry'd
Deſtruction thro' their ranks---Your leave a moment,
While to our chiefs, and fathers, I announce
Their unexpected gueſt.

SCENE V.

CORIOLANUS, GALESUS.

Cor. Thou good old man!
Cloſe let me ſtrain thee to my faithful heart,
Which now is doubly thine, united more
By the protection which thy country gives me,
Than by our former friendſhip.

Gal. Strange event!
This is thy work, almighty providence!
Whoſe power, beyond the ſtretch of human thought,
Revolves the orbs of empire; bids them ſink
Deep in the deadning night of thy diſpleaſure,
Or riſe majeſtic o'er a wondering world.
The Gods by thee---I ſee it, *Coriolanus*———
Mean to exalt us, and depreſs the *Romans*.

Cor. Galeſus, yes, the Gods have ſent me hither;
Thoſe righteous Gods, who, when vindictive juſtice
Excites them to deſtroy a worthleſs people,
Make their own crimes and follies ſtrike the blow.

Gal. Cheriſh theſe thoughts, that teach us what we are,
And tame the pride of man. There is a power,
Unſeen, that rules th' illimitable world,
That guides its motions, from the brighteſt ſtar,
To the leaſt duſt of this ſin-tainted mold;
While man, who madly deems himſelf the lord
Of all, is nought but weakneſs and dependance.
This ſacred truth, by ſure experience taught,

Thou

Thou muſt have learnt, when, wandering all alone,
Each bird, each inſect, flitting thro' the ſky,
Was more ſufficient for itſelf, than thou———
Ah the full image of thy woes diſſolves me!
The pangs that muſt have torn, at parting from thee,
Thy mother and thy wife. I cannot think
Of that ſad ſcene without ſome drops of pity!

Cor. Who was it forc'd me to that bitter parting?
Who, in one cruel, haſty moment, chas'd me
From wife, from children, friends, and houſhold Gods,
Me! who ſo often had protected theirs?
Who, from the ſacred city of my fathers,
Drove me with nature's commoners to dwell,
To lodge beneath their wide unſhelter'd roof,
And at their table feed? O blaſt me, Gods!
With every woe! debility of mind,
Diſhonour, juſt contempt, and palſy'd weakneſs,
If I forgive the villains! yes, *Galeſus*,
Yes, I will offer to the powers of vengeance
A great, a glorious victim---a whole city!———
Why, *Tullus*, this delay?

Gal. May *Coriolanus*
Be to the *Volſcian* nation, and himſelf,
The dread, the godlike inſtrument of juſtice!
But let not rage and vengeance mix their rancor;
Let them not trouble with their fretful ſtorm,
Their angry gleams, that azure, where enthron'd
The calm divinity of juſtice ſits,
And pities, while ſhe puniſhes, mankind.

Cor. What ſaidſt thou? What, againſt, the powers of vengeance?
The Gods gave honeſt anger, juſt revenge,
To be the awful guardians of the rights
And native dignity of human kind.

O were it not for them, the ſaucy world
Would grow a noiſome neſt of little tyrants!
Each carrion crow, on eagle merit perch'd,
Would peck his eyes out, and the mungril cur
At pleaſure bait the lion—No, *Galeſus*,
I would not raſhly, nor on light occaſion,
Receive the deep impreſſion in my breaſt;
But when the baſe, the brutal and unjuſt,
Or, worſe than all, th' ungrateful, ſtamp it there;
O I will then with luxury ſupreme
Enjoy the pleaſure of offended Gods,
A righteous, juſt revenge!---Behold my ſoul.

[*Enter an Officer.*]

Off. My lords, th' aſſembled chiefs deſire your preſence.

Gal. Come, noble *Marcius*; let my joyful hand
Conduct thee thither---Doubt not thy reception
Will be proportion'd to thy fame and merit.

SCENE VI.

The back ſcene opens, and diſcovers the deputies of the Volſcian *States, aſſembled in council. They riſe and ſalute* Coriolanus; *then reſume their places.*

GALESUS, TULLUS, CORIOLANUS, SENATORS.

Gal. Aſſembled ſtates, and captains of the *Volſci*,
Behold the chief ſo much renown'd in war;
Our once ſo formidable foe, but now
Our proffer'd friend and ſoldier---*Caius Marcius.*

1 *Sen.* We give him hearty welcome from our ſouls.

Cor. Moſt noble chiefs, and fathers of the *Volſci*,
I need not ſay, how by the people's rage,
And the poor weakneſs of the timid nobles,

I am

I am expell'd from *Rome*. Had I confin'd
My wiſhes merely to a ſafe retreat,
Some *Latine* city might have given me that;
Or any nameleſs corner. What imports it,
Where a tame, patient exile rots in ſilence?
But, *Volſcian* lords, permit me to declare,
I would at once cut ſhort my uſeleſs days,
Rather than be that deſpicable wretch,
Who neither can take vengeance on his foes,
Nor ſerve his friends. That is my temper, chiefs.
I ſhall be glad to merit, by my ſword,
Th' aſylum which I ſeek among the *Volſci*.
Rome is our common foe: then let us join
Our common ſufferings, paſſions, and reſentments.
Yes, tho' but one, I bring ſo many wrongs,
So large a ſhare of powerful enmity,
Into the war, as gives me the preſumption,
To offer to the *Volſcian* ſtates th' alliance
Even of my ſingle arm.———

Tul. That ſingle arm
Is in itſelf a numerous army, *Marcius*;
The *Volſcians* ſo eſteem it———But proceed.

Cor. I will not mention, *Volſcian* chiefs, what talent
The world allows me to poſſeſs in war:
But be that what it will, you may employ it.
Soldier, or captain, in whatever ſtation
You place me, I will loſe each drop of blood,
Or with this hand I'll fix the *Volſcian* ſtandard
On the proud towers of capitolian *Jove*.

Tul. Chiefs of the *Volſcian* league, I give you joy
Of our new citizen, the noble *Marcius*.
The genius of the *Volſcian* ſtate has ſent him,
Whetted by wrongs into a keener hatred
Than that we bear to *Rome*. It were contemning,

With impious ſelf-ſufficient arrogance,
This bounty of the Gods, not to accept,
With every mark of honour, of his ſervice.
I, *Volſcians*, I, even *Attius Tullus*, give,
Firſt of you all, my voice, that *Caius Marcius*
Be now receiv'd to high command among us;
That inſtantly we do appoint him general
Of half our troops, which here, with your conſent,
I to him yield.---Speak, chiefs, is this your pleaſure?

1 *Sen.* It is---We give unanimous conſent.

Tul. [*embracing him.*) *Marcius*, I joy to call thee my companion,
And collegue in this war.

Cor. By all the Gods!
Thou art the generous victor of my ſoul!
Yes, *Tullus*, I am conquer'd by thy virtue.

Gal. Tho' I have oft, on great occaſions, *Tullus*,
Beheld thee in the ſenate, and the field,
Cover'd with glory; yet, I muſt avow,
I never ſaw thee ſhew ſuch genuine greatneſs,
Such true ſublimity of ſoul, as now.
To ſcorn th' all-powerful charm of ſelfiſh paſſions,
Chiefly the dazzling pride of emulation,
That noble weakneſs of heroic minds,
To ſink thyſelf that thou may'ſt raiſe thy country;
To put the ſword into thy rival's hand,
And twine thy promis'd laurels round his brow——
O 'tis a flight beyond the higheſt point
Of martial glory! and what few can reach.
Go forth, ye choſen miniſters of juſtice;
And may that awful power, whoſe ſecret hand
Sways all our paſſions, turns our partial views
All to its own dread purpoſes, attend you!

Cor. I burn to enter on the glorious taſk

You

You now have mark'd me out. How ſlow the time
To the warm ſoul, that in the very inſtant
It forms, would execute, a great deſign.
'Tis my advice we march direct to *Rome*;
We cannot be too quick. Let the firſt dawn
See us in bright array before her walls.
Perhaps when they behold their exile there,
Back'd by your force, ſome conſcious hearts among them
May feel th' alarm of guilt.

Tul. I much approve
Of this advice. 'Tis what I thought before,
Ere ſtrengthen'd, *Marcius*, by thy mighty arm:
But now 'tis doubly right. Here, *Volſcian* chiefs,
Here let our council terminate---The troops
Have had repoſe ſufficient. Strait to *Rome*,
Come, let us urge our march---As yet the ſtars
Ride in their middle watch: we ſhall, with eaſe,
Reach it by dawn.———

Cor. Yes, we have time———too much!
Six tedious hours till morn---But hence! away!
My ſoul on fire anticipates the dawn.

End of the Second Act.

ACT III. SCENE I.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS, VOLUSIUS, TITUS, *with a croud of* Volſcian *officers. Acclamations behind the ſcenes.*

Cor. NO more---I merit not this laviſh praiſe.
True, we have driven the *Roman* legions back,
Defeated, and diſgrac'd---But what is this?
Nothing, ye *Volſci*, nothing yet is done.

We but begin the wond'rous leaf of ſtory,
That marks the *Roman* doom. At length it dawns,
The deſtin'd hour, that eaſes of their fears
The nations round, and ſets *Heſperia* free.
Come on, my brave companions of the war!
Come, let us finiſh at one mighty ſtroke
This toil of labouring fate- -We will, or periſh!
While, noble *Tullus*, you protect the camp,
I, with my troops, all men of choſen valor,
And well-approv'd to-day, will ſtorm the city.

Tit. Beneath thy animating conduct, *Marcius*,
What can the *Volſcian* valor not perform?
Thy very ſight and voice ſubdues the *Romans*.
When, lifting up your helm, you ſhew'd your face,
That like a comet glar'd deſtruction on them,
I ſaw their braveſt veterans fly before thee.
Their ancient ſpirit has with thee forſook them,
And ruin hangs o'er yon devoted walls.

[*Enter an officer, who addreſſes himſelf to* Coriolanus.]

Off. My lord, a herald is arriv'd from *Rome*,
To ſay, a deputation from the ſenate,
Attended by the miniſters of heaven,
A venerable train of prieſts and flamens,
Are on the way, addreſs'd to you.

Cor. To me!
What can this meſſage mean!---Stand to your arms,
Ye *Volſcian* troops; and let theſe *Romans* paſs
Betwixt the lowring frown of double files.
What! do they think me ſuch a milky boy,
To pay my vengeance with a few ſoft words.
Come, fellow-ſoldiers, *Tullus*, come, and ſee,
If I betray the honours you have done me.

[*Goes out with a train of* Volſcian *officers.*]

SCENE

SCENE II.

TULLUS, VOLUSIUS, *who remain.*

Vol. [*after ſome ſilence.*] Are we not, *Tullus*, failing in our duty
Not to attend our general?

Tul. How! what ſaidſt thou?

Vol. Methought, my lord, his parting orders were,
We ſhould attend the triumph now preparing
O'er all his foes at once—*Romans* and *Volſci!*
Come, we ſhall give offence.

Tul. Of this no more.
I pray thee ſpare thy bitter irony.

Vol. Shall I then ſpeak without diſguiſe?

Tul. Speak out,
With all the honeſt bluntneſs of a friend.
Think'ſt thou I fear the truth?

Vol. Then, *Tullus*, know,
Thou art no more the general of the *Volſci.*
Thou haſt, by this thy generous weakneſs, ſunk
Thyſelf into a private man of *Antium.*
Yes, thou haſt taken from thy laurel'd brow
The well earn'd trophies of thy toils and perils,
Thy ſpringing hopes, the faireſt ever budded,
And heap'd them on a man too proud before.

Tul. He bears it high.

Vol. Death and perdition! high!
With uncontroul'd command!—You ſee, already,
He will not be encumber'd with the fetters
Of our advice. He ſpeaks his ſovereign will;
On every hand he iſſues out his orders,
As to his natural ſlaves.—For you, my lord,
He has, I think, confin'd you to your camp,

There

There in inglorious indolence to languiſh;
While he, beneath your blaſted eye, ſhall reap
The harveſt of your honour.

Tul. No, *Voluſius*,
Whatever honour ſhall by him be gain'd
Reverts to me, from whoſe ſuperior bounty
He drew the means of all his glorious deeds.
This mighty chief, this conqueror of *Rome*,
Is but my creature.——

Vol. Wretched ſelf-deluſion;
He and the *Volſcians* know he is thy maſter.
He acts as ſuch in all things—Now, by *Mars*,
Could my abhorrent ſoul endure the thought
Of ſtooping to a *Roman* chief, I here
Would leave thee in thy ſolitary camp,
And go where glory calls.

Tul. Indeed, *Voluſius*,
I did expect more equal treatment from him.
But what of that?—The generous pride of virtue
Diſdains to weigh too nicely the returns
Her bounty meets with—Like the liberal Gods,
From her own gracious nature ſhe beſtows,
Nor ſtoops to aſk reward—Yet muſt I own,
I thought he would not have ſo ſoon forgot
What he ſo lately was, and what I am.

Vol. Gods! knew you not his character before?
Did you not know his genius was to yours
Averſe, as are antipathies in nature?
High, over-weening, tyrannouſly proud,
And only fit to hold command o'er ſlaves?
Hence, as repugnant to that equal life,
Which is the quickening ſoul of all republics,
The *Roman* people caſt him forth; and we,
Shall we receive the bane of their repoſe,
Into our breaſt? Are we leſs free than they?

Or

Or ſhall we be more patient of a tyrant?

Tul. All this I knew. But while his imperfections
Are thy glad theme, thou haſt forgot his virtues.

Vol. I leave that ſubject to the ſmooth *Galeſus*,
And theſe his *Volſcian* flatterers—His virtues!
Truſt me there is no inſolence that treads
So high as that which rears itſelf on virtue.

Tul. Well, be it ſo—I meant, that even his vices
Should, on this great occaſion, ſerve the *Volſci*.

Vol. Confuſion! there it is! there lurks the ſting
Of our diſhonour! while this *Marcius* leads
The *Roman* armies, ours are driven before him.
Behold, he changes ſides; when with him changes
The fortune of the war. Straît they grow *Volſci*,
And we victorious *Romans*—Such, no doubt,
Such is his ſecret boaſt—Ay, this vile brand
Succeſs itſelf will fix for ever on us;
And, *Tullus*, thou, 'tis thou muſt anſwer for it.

Tul. [*aſide.*] His words are daggers to my heart, I feel
Their truth, but am aſham'd to own my folly.

Vol. O ſhame! O infamy! the thought conſumes me,
It ſcalds my eyes with tears, to ſee a *Roman*
Borne on our ſhoulders to immortal fame:
Juſt in the happy moment that decided
The long diſpute of ages, that for which
Our generous anceſtors had toil'd and bled,
To ſee him then ſtep in and ſteal our glory!
O that we firſt had periſh'd all! A people,
Who cannot find in their own proper force
Their own protection, are not worth the ſaving!

Tul. It muſt have way! I will no more ſuppreſs it—
Know then, my rough old friend, no leſs than thee
His conduct hurts me and upbraids my folly.
I wake as from a dream. What demon mov'd me?

What

What doting generoſity? his woes,
Was it his woes! to ſee the brave reduc'd
To truſt his mortal foe? perhaps, a little
That work'd within my boſom—But, *Voluſius*,
That was not all——I will to thee confeſs
The weakneſs of my heart—Yes, it was pride,
The dazzling pride to ſee my rival-warrior,
The great *Coriolanus*, bend his ſoul,
His haughty ſoul, to ſue for my protection.
Protection ſaid I? were it that alone,
I had been baſe to have refus'd him that,
To have refus'd him aught a gallant foe
Owes to a gallant foe.—But to exalt him
To the ſame level, nay above myſelf;
To yield him the command of half my troops,
The choiceſt acting half—That, that was madneſs!
Was weak, was mean, unworthy of a man!——

Vol. I ſcorn to flatter thee—It was indeed.

Tul. Curſe on the ſlave *Galeſus!* ſoothing, he
Seiz'd the fond moment of infatuation,
And clinch'd the chains my generous folly forg'd.
How ſhall I from this labyrinth eſcape?
Muſt it then be! what cruel genius dooms me,
In war or peace, to creep beneath his fortune?

Vol. That genius is thyſelf. If thou canſt bear
The very thought of ſtooping to this *Roman*,
Thou from that moment art his vaſſal, *Tullus*;
By that thou doſt acknowledge, parent nature
Has form'd him thy ſuperior. But if fix'd
Upon the baſe of manly reſolution,
Thou ſay'ſt—I will be free! I will command!
I and my country! then—O never doubt it—
We ſhall find means to cruſh this vain intruder;
Even I myſelf—this hand————

Nay,

Nay, hear me, *Tullus*,
'Tis not yet come to that, that laſt reſource.
I do not ſay we ſhould employ the dagger,
While other, better means are in our power.
Tul. No, my *Voluſius*, fortune will not drive us,
Or I am much deceiv'd, to that extreme:
We ſhall not want the ſtrongeſt faireſt plea,
To give a ſolemn ſanction to his fate.
He will betray himſelf. Whate'er his rage
Of paſſion talks, a weakneſs for his country
Sticks in his ſoul, and he is ſtill a *Roman*.
Soon ſhall we ſee him tempted to the brink
Of this ſure precipice---Then down at once,
Without remorſe, we hurl him to perdition!
But hark! the trumpet calls us to a ſcene
I ſhould deteſt, if not from hope we thence
May gather matter to mature our purpoſe.

SCENE III.

The back ſcene opens, and diſcovers Coriolanus *ſitting on his tribunal, attended by his lictors, and a croud of* Volſcian *officers. Files of troops drawn up on either hand. In the depth of the ſcene appear the deputies from the* Roman *ſenate,* M. Minucius, Poſthumus Cominius, Sp. Lartius, P. Pinnarius, *and* Q. Sulpitius, *all conſular ſenators, who had been his moſt zealous friends. And behind them march the prieſts, the ſacrificers, the augurs, and the guardians of the ſacred things, dreſt in their ceremonial habits. Theſe advance ſlowly, betwixt the files of ſoldiers, under arms. As* Tullus *enters,* Coriolanus *riſing ſalutes him.*

CORIOLANUS.

Here noble *Tullus*, ſit, and judge my conduct;

Nor

Nor ſpare to check me, if I act amiſs.

Tul. Marcius, the *Volſcian* fate is in thy hands,

[Coriolanus *is ſeated again, and* Tullus *places himſelf upon a tribunal on his left hand. Mean-time the* Roman *deputies advance up to* Coriolanus, *and ſalute him, which he returns.*]

Cor. What, *Romans*, from the generals of the *Volſci*,
Is your demand?

Min. O *Coriolanus*, *Rome*,
Nurſe of thy tender years, thy parent-city,
Her ſenators, her people, prieſts, and augurs,
Her every order and degree, by us,
Thy ever-zealous, ſtill unſhaken friends,
Sue in the moſt pathetic terms for peace.
And if in this conſtrain'd, we from our maxim,
Never to aſk but give it, muſt depart;
It is ſome conſolation, in the ſtate
To which thou haſt by thy ſuperior valor
Reduc'd us, that we aſk it from a *Roman.*

Cor. I was a *Roman* once, and thought the name
Was not diſhonour'd by me; but it pleas'd
Your lords, the mob of *Rome*, to take it from me;
Nor will I now receive it back again.

Min. The name thou may'ſt reject, but canſt not throw
The duties from thee which that name imports;
Indiſſoluble duties bound upon thee
By the ſtrong hand of nature, and confirm'd
By the dread ſanction of all-ruling *Jove.*
Then hear thy country's ſupplicating voice;
By all thoſe duties I conjure thee hear us.

Cor. Well---I will hear thee; ſpeak, declare thy meſſage.

Min. Give peace, give healing peace, to two brave nations,

Fatigu'd

Fatigu'd with war and ſick of cruel deeds!
To carry on deſtruction's eaſy trade,
Afflict mankind, and ſcourge the world with war,
Is what each wicked, each ambitious man,
Who lets his furious paſſions looſe, may do:
But in the flattering torrent of ſucceſs,
To check his rage, and drop the avenging ſword,
When a repenting people aſk it of him,
That is the genuine bounty of a God.
Then urge no farther this your juſt reſentment:
Which, injur'd as you are, you needs muſt feel,
But never ought to carry into action
Againſt your ſacred country; whence you drew
Your life, your virtues, every moral good,
That very valor you employ againſt her.
Stop, *Coriolanus*, ere, beyond retreat
You plunge yourſelf in crimes. To the fierce joy
Of vengeance puſh'd, to barbarous exceſs,
Repentance will ſucceed, and ſickening horror.
Conſider, too, the ſlippery ſtate of fortune.
The Gods take pleaſure oft, when haughty mortals
On their own pride erect a mighty fabric,
By ſlighteſt means, to lay their towering ſchemes
Low in the duſt, and teach them they are nothing.
Return, thou virtuous *Roman!* to the boſom
Of thy imploring country. Lo! her arms
She fondly ſpreads to take thee back again.
And by redoubled love efface her harſhneſs.
Return, and crown thee with the nobleſt wreath
Which glory can beſtow---the palm of mercy!

Cor. Marcus Minucius, and ye other *Romans*,
Reſpected ſenators, and holy flamens,
Attend, and take to your demand this anſwer:
Why court you me, the ſervant of the *Volſci?*

It

It is to them that you muſt bend for peace,
Which on theſe only terms they will accord you.
" Reſtore the conquer'd lands, your former wars
" Have raviſh'd from them: from their towns and
" cities,
" Won by your arms, withdraw your colonies;
" And to the full immunities of *Rome*
" Frankly admit them, as you have the *Latines*"
Then, *Romans*, you have peace, and not till then!
If theſe are terms which ſuit not your ambition,
They ſuit the ſtate to which the *Volſcian* arms
Have now reduc'd you---We have learn'd from *Rome*
To uſe our fortune, and command the vanquiſh'd.

Tul. [*aſide.*] Death to my hopes! I'm now his ſlave for ever.

Cor. [*addreſſing himſelf to the* Volſci.] This, my illuſtrious patrons and protectors,
Volſci, to you I owed. Permit me now
To do myſelf and injur'd honour juſtice.
[*Turning again to the* Romans.]
As to the liberty you idly vaunt
To give me of returning to your city,
'Tis what I hold unworthy of acceptance.
Can I return into th' ungrateful boſom
Of a diſtracted ſtate, where, to the rage
Of a vile ſenſeleſs populace, the laws
Are by your ſhameful weakneſs given a prey?
Who are the men that hold the ſway among you?
And whom have you expell'd, as even unworthy
To live within the cincture of your walls!—
O the wild thought breaks in and troubles reaſon!
With what, ye *Romans*, can the ſowereſt cenſor,
The moſt envenom'd malice juſtly charge me?
Did I e'er break your laws? Nay, did I e'er
Do aught that could diſturb the ſacred order,

The

The peace and ſocial harmony of life;
Or taint your antient ſanctity of manners?
What was my crime? I could not bear to ſee
Your dignity debas'd, to ſee the rabble
Tread on the reverend grey authority
Of ſenatorial wiſdom: yes, for you,
In your defence I did enrage this monſter;
And yet you baſely left me to its fury.
Then talk no more of ſervices and friendſhip:
A friend, who can, and does not ſhield, betrays me.
Or if the power was wanting, then your ſenate
Is ſunk into ſervility and bondage,
Nor ſhould a freeman deign to ſit among you.

Min. The wiſeſt are ſometimes compell'd to yield
To popular ſtorms: yet I defend not *Marcius*,
Our timid conduct; we have felt our error,
And now invite thee back to aid the ſenate,
With thy heroic ſpirit, to reſtrain
The giddy rage of faction, and to hold
The reins of government more firm hereafter.
As to th' appeal which thou haſt nobly made,
In vindication of thy ſpotleſs fame,
With pleaſure we confirm it, and bear witneſs
To all thy public and thy private virtues:
But let us alſo beg thee not to ſtain
The brightneſs of that glory by a crime,
Which, unrepented, would diſgrace them all,
A dire rebellious war againſt thy country.

Cor. Abſurd! What can you mean? To call a people,
Who with the laſt indignity have us'd me,
To call my foes my country! No, *Minucius*,
It is the generous nation of the *Volſci*,
Theſe brave, theſe virtuous men, you ſee around me,
Who,

Who, when I wander'd a poor helpleſs exile,
Took pity of my injuries and woes;
Forgot the former miſchiefs of my ſword;
Heap'd on me kindneſs, honours, dignities;
Fear'd not to truſt me with this high command,
And plac'd me here the guardian of their cauſe:—
Be witneſs, *Jove!*—It is alone their nation
I henceforth will acknowledge for my country!
Let this ſuffice—you have my anſwer, *Romans.*

Com. This anſwer, *Coriolanus*, is the dictate
More of thy pride than magnanimity:
'Tis thy revenge that gives it, not thy virtue.
Art thou above the Gods? who joy to ſhow'r
Their doubled goodneſs on repenting mortals?
But think not I intend, by this, to urge
Our profer'd peace, ſo harſhly treated, further.
That were a weakneſs ill becoming *Romans.*
Yet I muſt tell thee, it would better ſuit
A fierce deſpotic chief of barbarous ſlaves,
Than the calm dignity of one who ſits
In the grave ſenate of a free republic,
To talk ſo high, and as it were to thruſt
Plebeians from the native rights of man.——

Cor. Ha! doſt thou come the people's advocate
To me, *Cominius!* comeſt thou to inſult me?

Com. Nay, hear me, *Marcius:*—Theſe grey hairs impower me
To ſet thee right before this great aſſembly:
And there was once a time, thou wouldſt have heard
Thy general with deference and patience——
I tell thee then, whoe'er amidſt the ſons
Of reaſon, valor, liberty, and virtue,
Diſplays diſtinguiſh'd merit, is a noble
Of nature's own creating. Such have riſen,

Sprung

Sprung from the duſt; or where had been our honours?
And ſuch in radiant bands will riſe again,
In yon immortal city, that, when moſt
Depreſt by fate, and near apparent ruin,
Returns, as with an energy divine,
On her aſtoniſh'd foes, and ſhakes them from her—
Your pardon, *Volſci*—But this, *Coriolanus*,
Is what I had to ſay.

Cor. And I have heard it———

[*Riſing from his tribunal; and the prieſts advancing to addreſs him, he prevents them,*]

For you, ye awful miniſters of heaven,
Let me not hear your holy lips profan'd
By urging what my duty muſt refuſe.
I bow in adoration to the Gods;
I venerate their ſervants. But there is,
There is a power, their chief, their darling care,
The guardian of mankind, which to betray
Were violating all—And that is juſtice.
So far my public character demands;
So far my honour—Now, what ſhould forbid
The man, and friend, to be indulg'd a little?
Permit me to embrace thee, good *Minucius*,
Thee *Lartius*; you, *Pinnarius* and *Sulpitius*:
But chiefly thee, *Cominius*, who firſt rais'd me
To deeds of arms; who from thy conſular brow
Took thy own crown, and with it circled mine.
Tho' nought can ſhake my purpoſe, yet I wiſh
That *Rome* had ſent me others on this errand.
I thank you for your friendſhip. The protection,
Which you have given to thoſe, whom once I call'd
By tender names, I would not now remember.
How ſhall I—ſay—return your generous goodneſs?

O there

O there is nothing you, as friends, can aſk,
My grateful heart will not with pleaſure grant you.
Com. We thank thee, *Coriolanus*—But a *Roman*
Diſdains that favour you refuſe his country.
Cor. [*To the* Volſcian *officers*] See that they be, with due regard and ſafety,
Conducted back.
[*To the* Roman *ſenators.*] I will ſuſpend th' aſſault,
Till to theſe terms, of which we will not bate
The ſmalleſt part, your ſenate may have time
To ſend their lateſt anſwer. Then we cut
All further treaty off. *Romans*, farewel.

END *of the* THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

TULLUS *alone.*

WHAT is the mind of man? A reſtleſs ſcene
Of vanity and weakneſs; ſhifting ſtill,
As ſhift the lights of our uncertain knowledge;
Or as the various gale of paſſion breathes.
None ever thought himſelf more deeply founded
On what is right; nor felt a nobler ardor,
Than I, when I inveſted *Caius Marcius*
With this ill-judg'd command. Now it appears
Diſtraction, folly, monſtrous folly! meanneſs!
And down I plunge, betray'd even by my virtue,
From gulph to gulph, from ſhame to deeper ſhame.

SCENE II.

TULLUS, GALESUS.

Gal. I liſten'd, *Tullus*, to th' important ſcene
That

That lately paſs'd before us, with moſt ſtrict,
Unprejudic'd attention; and have ſince
Revolv'd it in my mind, both as a man,
Ally'd to all mankind, and as a *Volſcian.*
Indeed our terms are high, and by the manner
In which they were preſcrib'd by *Coriolanus,*
Are what we cannot hope will e'er be granted.
They ſhould be ſoften'd. Let us yield a little,
Conſcious ourſelves to a great nation's pride,
The pride of human nature. Could the *Romans*
Stoop to ſuch peace, commanded by the ſword,
They then were ſlaves, unworthy our alliance.

Tul. Gods! do I hear in thee, one of the chiefs
Intruſted with the honour of the *Volſci,*
An advocate for *Rome?*

Gal. I glory, *Tullus,*
To own myſelf an advocate for peace.
Peace is the happy, natural ſtate of man;
War his corruption, his diſgrace---

Tul. His ſafeguard!
His pride! his glory!---What but war, juſt war,
Gave *Greece* her heroes? Thoſe who drew the ſword
(As we do now) againſt the ſons of rapine;
To quell proud tyrants, and to free mankind.

Gal. Yes, *Tullus,* when to juſt defence the warrior
Confines his force, he is a worſhip'd name,
Dear to mankind, the firſt and beſt of mortals!
Yet ſtill, if this can by ſoft means be done,
And fair accommodation, that is better.
Why ſhould we purchaſe with the blood of thouſands,
What may be gain'd by mutual juſt conceſſion?
Why give up peace, the beſt of human bleſſings,
For the vain cruel pride of uſeleſs conqueſt?

Tul. Theſe ſoothing dreams of philoſophic quiet

Are

Are only fit for unfrequented ſhades.
The ſage ſhould quit the buſy buſtling world
Ill ſuited to his gentle meditations,
And in ſome deſart find that peace he loves.

Gal. Miſtaken man! Philoſophy conſiſts not
In airy ſchemes, or idle ſpeculations:
The rule and conduct of all ſocial life
Is her great province. Not in lonely cells
Obſcure ſhe lurks, but holds her heavenly light
To ſenates and to kings, to guide their councils,
And teach them to reform and bleſs mankind.
All policy but her's is falſe, and rotten;
All valor, not conducted by her precepts,
Is a deſtroying fury ſent from hell
To plague unhappy man, and ruin nations.

Tul. To ſtop the waſte of that deſtroying fury,
Is the great cauſe and purpoſe of this war.
Art thou a friend to peace?---ſubdue the *Romans*.
Who, who, but they, have turn'd this antient land,
Where, from *Saturnian* times, harmonious concord
Still lov'd to dwell, into a ſcene of blood,
Of endleſs diſcord and perpetual rapine?
The ſword, the vengeful ſword, muſt drain away
This boiling blood, that thus diſturbs the nations!
Talk not of terms. It is a vain attempt
To bind th' ambitious and unjuſt by treaties:
Theſe they elude a thouſand ſpecious ways;
Or if they cannot find a fair pretext,
They bluſh not in the face of heaven to break them.

Gal. Why then affronted heaven will combat for us.
Set juſtice on our ſide, and then my voice
Shall be as loud for war as thine; my ſword
Shall ſtrike as deep; at leaſt my blood ſhall flow
As freely, *Tullus*, in my country's cauſe.

But

But as I then would die to ſerve the *Volſcians*,
So now I dare to ſerve them by oppoſing,
Even with my ſingle voice, th' impetuous torrent
That hurries us away beyond the bounds
Of temperate wiſdom; and preſume to tell thee,
It is thy paſſion, not thy prudence dictates
This haughty language.

Tul. Yes, it is my paſſion,
A paſſion for the glory of my country,
That ſcorns your narrow views of timid prudence.
Our injur'd honour drew our ſwords, and never
Shall they be ſheath'd while I command the *Volſcians*,
Till *Rome* ſubmits to *Antium*.———

Gal. Rome will periſh
Ere ſhe ſubmit; and ſhe has ſtill her walls,
The ſtrength of her allies, her native valor,
Which oft has ſav'd her in the worſt extremes,
And, ſtronger yet than all, deſpair, to aid her.

Tul. All theſe will nought avail her, if our fears
Come not to her aſſiſtance—But, *Galeſus*,
Why urge you this to me? Go, talk to *Marcius*.
The war has given him all his pride could hope for,
To ſee *Rome*'s ſenate humbled at his feet:
He now may wiſh to reign in peace at *Antium*,
And thou, perhaps, art come an envoy from him,
To learn if I ſhall prove a quiet ſubject.

Gal. Thro' this unguarded opening of thy ſoul,
I ſee what ſtings thee—Ah! beware of envy!
If that pale fury ſeize thee, thou art loſt!
Tullus, 'tis eaſier far, from the clear breaſt,
To keep out treacherous vice, than to expel it.
Farewel. Remember I have done my duty. [*Goes out.*]

Tul. [*alone.*] This man diſcerns my heart—Well:
What of that?

Am I afraid its movements ſhould be ſeen?
I, whoſe clear thoughts have never ſhunn'd the light,
Muſt I now ſeek to hide them? O misfortune!
To have reduc'd myſelf to ſuch a ſtate,
So much beneath the greatneſs of my ſoul,
That, like a coward, I muſt learn to practiſe
The wretched arts of vile diſſimulation!
By heaven I will not do't—I will not ſtoop
To veil my diſcontent a moment longer.
But ſee! my rival comes, the happy *Marcius*.
His haughty mein, his very looks, affront me.

SCENE III.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. Tullus, I have receiv'd intelligence,
That a ſtrong body of the *Latin* troops
Is in full march to raiſe the ſiege of *Rome*.
Another day will bring them to its aid.
But go thou forth, and lead the valiant bands,
By thee commanded, to repel theſe ſuccours.
Go, and cut off from *Rome* its laſt reſource.

Tul. I lead my troops from the great ſcene of action,
From falling *Rome*, which, ere to-morrow's ſun
Shall ſet, may be our prey! ſure you forget
My rank and ſtation—I diſdain the ſervice:
Give it to ſome you may command. For me,
I own no maſter but the *Volſcian* ſtates.
Rome is my object. I from *Antium* brought
The nobleſt army ever ſhook her walls.
And ſhall I now, on that deciſive day,
Doom'd by the Gods to lay her pride in aſhes,
Shall I be abſent from the glorious work?
It is the higheſt outrage even to think it.—

Juſt

Juſt Gods! doſt thou preſume to give thy orders
To me? to me! thy equal in command?
Nay, thy ſuperior? was it not my hand,
My laviſh hand, beſtow'd thy power upon thee?
And know, proud *Roman*, that the man who gave it,
Can at his will reſume it.

Cor. I propos'd
This expedition to thee as thy friend,
Not as thy general, *Tullus*. We are both
Commanders here; and for my ſhare of power,
Whene'er the council of the *Volſcian* ſtates,
Who cloth'd me with it, ſhall again demand it,
I at their feet will lay it down, perſuaded,
The canker'd tongue of envy's ſelf muſt own,
That by my ſervice I have well deſerv'd it.

Tul. Was it to them, or me, you thither came
To crave protection? Was not then your fortune,
Your liberty, your life, at my diſpoſal?
I rais'd you from the duſt, a wretched exile,
An outcaſt, helpleſs, friendleſs, driven to beg
The loweſt refuge which deſpair can ſeek,
Shelter amidſt thy foes. My pitying goodneſs
Protected, truſted, and believ'd you grateful.
O ill-plac'd confidence!—

Cor. Immortal Gods!
Hear I theſe words from *Tullus!*

Tul. What for all this
Is thy return? pride; ſelf-ſufficiency?
Councils apart from mine; deſpotic orders;
The glory of the war all pilfer'd from me!
And, to complete the whole, a *Latin* army
Now conjur'd up to draw me from the ſiege;
Till by cajoling our tame chiefs, and dazzling
The ſenſeleſs eyes of the low mob of ſoldiers,

Thou ſhalt be ſolely ſeated in the power
Which, thank my folly! now is ſhar'd betwixt us.
Cor. O indignation?—Down, thou ſwelling heart—
I will be calm—I will—Thou doſt accuſe me
Of the worſt vice that can debaſe mankind,
Of black ingratitude. On what foundations?
What have I done to merit ſuch a charge?
Is it my fault, if in the *Volſcian* army
My name is as rever'd and great as thine?
Can I forbid authority and fame,
To follow merit and ſucceſs?——You knew
The man whom you employ'd, and ſhould have known
He would not be a cypher in employment.
Tul. Think'ſt thou my heart can better brook than thine
To be that cypher! that diſhonour'd tool!
Subſervient to th' ambition of another?
Gods? I had rather live a drudging peaſant,
Unknown to glory, in ſome *Alpine* village;
Than at the head of theſe victorious legions,
Bear the high name of chief, without the power.
No, *Marcius*, no. I will command indeed:
And thou ſhalt learn, with all the *Volſcian* army,
To treat their general with reſpect.
Cor. Reſpect!
O *Tullus! Tullus!* by the powers divine!
I bore thee once reſpect, as high as man
Can ſhew to man. From thee, my foe, my rival,
I nor diſdain'd, nor fear'd to aſk protection.
You gave me all I aſk'd, you gave me more,
With noble warmth of heart! which to eſteem,
Added the ties of gratitude and friendſhip.
Whatever ſince, in council, or in arms,
Has been by me atchiev'd, was done for thee.

My

My glory all was thine. The palms I gain'd
Only compos'd a garland for his brow,
Who rais'd this baniſh'd man to tread on *Rome.*
Tul. To tread on him who rais'd him—That, I know,
Is thy ambitious purpoſe; but be certain,
However *Rome* may bend beneath thy fortune,
Thou ſhalt not find an eaſy conqueſt here.
Cor. May *Jove* with lightning ſtrike me to the centre,
If from the day I ſaw thy face at *Antium*,
My heart has ever form'd one ſecret thought
To hurt thy honour, or depreſs thy greatneſs:
I was thy friend, thy ſoldier, and thy ſervant.
But now I will as openly avow,
Thy jealouſy has, with envenom'd breath,
Made ſuch a ſudden ravage in our friendſhip,
I know not what to think.———
Tul. Think me thy foe.
There is no laſting friendſhip with the proud.
Cor. Nor with the jealous—But of this enough.
Come, let us turn our fire a nobler way:
We have a worthier quarrel to purſue.———
It were unjuſt, diſhonourable, baſe,
Our pride ſhould hurt the *Volſcian* cauſe.
Tul. No, *Marcius*,
I mean to guard it better for the future:
The *Volſcian* cauſe is ſafeſt with a *Volſcian.*
I therefore claim, inſiſt upon my right;
That you ſhould yield me my command in turn.
The firſt attack was yours: 'tis ſcanty juſtice,
The ſecond ſhould be mine.
Cor. Tullus, 'tis yours.
O it imports not which of us command!
Give me the loweſt rank among your troops;
All *Italy* will know, the voice of fame

Will tell all future times, that I was preſent;
That *Coriolanus* in the *Volſcian* army
Aſſiſted, when imperial *Rome* was ſack'd;
That city which, while he maintain'd her cauſe,
Invincible herſelf, made *Antium* tremble.

Tul. What arrogant preſumption!

SCENE IV.

To them VOLUSIUS, *entering haſtily.*

Tul. Ha! *Voluſius*,
Thy looks declare ſome meſſage of importance.

Vol. Tullus, they do—I was to find thee, *Marcius*.
To thee a ſecond deputation comes,
Thy mother, and thy wife, with a long train
Of all the nobleſt ladies *Rome* can boaſt,
In mourning habits clad, approach our camp,
Preceded by a herald, to demand
Another audience of thee.

Cor. How, *Voluſius!*
Said you the *Roman* ladies! Low, indeed,
Muſt be the ſtate of *Rome*, when thus her matrons
She ſends amidſt the tumults of a camp,
To beg protection for the men, who lye
Trembling behind their ramparts—come! once more!
And ſee me put an end to prayers and treaty!

SCENE V.

TULLUS, VOLUSIUS.

Vol. Tullus, 'tis well. This anſwers to my wiſhes.

Tul. How! what is well? that humbled *Rome* once more
Shall deck him with the trophies of our arms?

Vol. And

Vol. And hopeſt thou nothing from this bleſt event?
They who have often blaſted mighty heroes,
Who oft have ſtolen into the firmeſt hearts,
And melted them to folly; they, my friend,
Will do what wiſdom never could effect.

Tul. Think'ſt thou the prayers and tears of wailing women
Can ſhake the man, who with ſuch cold diſdain
Stood firm againſt thoſe venerable conſuls,
And ſpurn'd the genius of his kneeling country?

Vol. It was his pride alone that made him ours.
That paſſion kept him firm; the flattering charm
Of humbling thoſe, who in their perſons bore
The whole collected majeſty of *Rome*.
Theſe women are no proper objects for it:
He cannot triumph o'er his wife and mother.
On this my hopes are founded, that theſe women
May by their gentler influence ſubdue him.

Tul. Whate'er th' event, he ſhall no longer here,
As wave his paſſions, dictate peace or war.
Whether his ſtubborn ſoul maintains its firmneſs,
Or yields to female prayers, the *Volſcian* honour
Will be alike betray'd. If *Rome* prevails,
He ſtops our conquering arms from her deſtruction;
If he rejects her ſuit, he reigns our tyrant.
But, by th' immortal Gods! his ſhort-liv'd empire
Shall never ſee yon radiant ſun deſcend.

Vol. Bleſt be thoſe Gods that have at laſt inſpir'd thee
With reſolution equal to thy cauſe,
The cauſe of liberty!———

Tul. Be ſure, *Voluſius*,
If that ſhould happen which thy hopes portend;
Should he, by nature tamed, diſarm'd by love,
Reſpite the *Roman* doom—He ſeals his own:

By heaven! he dies.

Vol. Let me embrace thee, *Tullus!*
Now breaking from the cloud, which, like the ſun,
Thy own too bounteous beams had drawn around thee.

Tul. You was deceiv'd, my friend. When I with tameneſs,
With tameneſs which aſtoniſh'd thy brave ſpirit,
Seem'd to ſubmit to that unequal ſway
He arrogated o'er me; know, my heart
Ne'er ſwell'd ſo high as in that cruel moment.
My indignation, like th' impriſon'd fire
Pent in the troubled breaſt of glowing *Aetna*,
Burnt deep and ſilent: but, collected now,
It ſhall beneath its fury bury *Marcius!*
'Tis fixt. Our tyrant dies.

Vol. Tullus, my ſword
Here claims to be employ'd.—Nor mine alone—
There are ſome worthy *Volſci* ſtill remaining,
Who think with us, and pine beneath the laurels
A *Roman* chief beſtows.

Tul. Go, find them ſtrait,
And bring them to the ſpace before his tent;
'Tis there he will receive this deputation.
Then if he ſinks beneath theſe womens prayers—
Or if he does not—But, *Voluſius*, wait,
I give thee ſtricteſt charge to wait my ſignal.
Perhaps I may find means to free the *Volſci*
Without his blood. If not—We will be free.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT

ACT V. SCENE I.

Trumpets ſounding.

The ſcene diſcovers the camp, a croud of Volſcian *officers, with files of ſoldiers, drawn up as before. Enter* Coriolanus, Tullus, Galeſus, Voluſius. *The* Roman *ladies advance ſlowly from the depth of the ſtage, with* Veturia, *the mother of* Coriolanus, *and* Volumnia, *his wife, at their head, all clad in habits of mourning.* Coriolanus *ſtands at the head of the* Volſci, *ſurrounded by his lictors; but, when he perceives his mother and wife, after ſome ſtruggle, he advances, and goes haſtily to embrace them.*

CORIOLANUS, *advancing.*

LOWER your faſces, lictors—
Oh *Veturia!*
Thou beſt of parents!
Vet. Coriolanus, ſtop.
Whom am I to embrace? A ſon, or foe?
Say, in what light am I regarded here?
Thy mother, or thy captive?
Cor. Juſtly, Madam,
You check my fondneſs, that, by nature hurry'd,
Forgot I was the general of the *Volſci*,
And you a deputy from hoſtile *Rome.*
[*He goes back to his former ſtation.*]
I hear you with reſpect. Speak your commiſſion.
Vet. Think not I come a deputy from *Rome.*
Rome, once rejected, ſcorns a ſecond ſuit.
You have already heard whate'er the tongue
Of eloquence can plead, whate'er the wiſdom

Of ſacred age, the dignity of ſenates,
And virtue can enforce. Behold me here,
Sent by the ſhades of your immortal fathers,
Sent by the genius of the *Marcian* line,
Commiſſion'd by my own maternal heart,
To try the ſoft, yet ſtronger powers of nature.
Thus authoriz'd, I aſk, nay, claim a peace,
On equal, fair, and honourable terms,
To thee, to *Rome*, and to the *Volſcian* people.
Grant it my ſon. Thy mother begs it of thee,
Thy wife, the beſt, the kindeſt of her ſex,
And theſe illuſtrious matrons, who have ſooth'd
The gloomy hours thou haſt been abſent from us.
We, by whate'er is great and good in nature,
By every duty, by the Gods, conjure thee!
To grant us peace, and turn on other foes
Thy arms, where thou may'ſt purchaſe virtuous glory.

Cor. I ſhould, *Veturia*, break thoſe holy bonds
That hold the wide republic of mankind,
Society, together; I ſhould grow
A wretch, unworthy to be call'd thy ſon;
I ſhould, with my *Volumnia*'s fair eſteem,
Forfeit her love; theſe matrons would deſpiſe me—
Could I betray the *Volſcian* cauſe, thus truſted,
Thus recommended to me—No, my mother,
You cannot, ſure you cannot aſk it of me!

Vet. And does my ſon ſo little know me? me!
Who took ſuch care to form his tender years,
Left to my conduct by his dying father?
Have I ſo ill deſerv'd that truſt? alas!
Am I ſo low in thy eſteem, that thou
Should'ſt ere imagine I could urge a part
Which in the leaſt might ſtain the *Marcian* honour?
No, let me periſh rather! periſh all!

Life

Life has no charms compared with ſpotleſs glory!
I only aſk, thou wouldſt forbid thy troops
To waſte our lands, and to aſſault yon city,
Till time be given for mild and righteous meaſures.
Grant us but one year's truce: mean-while thou may'ſt,
With honour and advantage to both nations,
Between us mediate a perpetual peace.

Cor. Alas! my mother! that were granting all.

Vet. Canſt thou refuſe me ſuch a juſt petition,
The firſt requeſt thy mother ever made thee?
Canſt thou to her intreaties, prayers, and tears,
Prefer a ſavage obſtinate revenge?
Have love and nature loſt all power within thee?

Cor. No,—in my heart they reign as ſtrong as ever.
Come, I conjure you, quit ungrateful *Rome*;
Come, and complete my happineſs at *Antium*,
You, and my dear *Volumnia*—There, *Veturia*,
There ſhall you ſee with what reſpect the *Volſci*
Will treat the wife and mother of their general.

Vet. Treat me thyſelf with more reſpect, my ſon;
Nor dare to ſhock my ears with ſuch propoſals.
Shall I deſert my country, I who come
To plead her cauſe? Ah no!—A grave in *Rome*
Would better pleaſe me, than a throne at *Antium*.
How haſt thou thus forſaken all my precepts?
How haſt thou thus forgot thy love to *Rome?*
O *Coriolanus*, when with hoſtile arms,
With fire and ſword, you enter'd on our borders,
Did not the foſtering air, that breathes around us,
Allay thy guilty fury, and inſtil
A certain native ſweetneſs thro' thy ſoul?
Did not your heart thus murmur to itſelf?
" Theſe walls contain whatever can command
" Reſpect from virtue, or is dear to nature,

" The

" The monuments of piety and valor,
" The ſculptur'd forms, the trophies of my fathers,
" My houſhold Gods, my mother, wife and children!

Cor. Ah! you ſeduce me with too tender views!
Theſe walls contain the moſt corrupt of men,
A baſe ſeditious herd; who trample order,
Diſtinction, juſtice, laws, beneath their feet,
Inſolent foes to worth, the foes of virtue!

Vet. Thou haſt not thence a right to lift thy hand
Againſt the whole community, which forms
Thy ever ſacred country—that conſiſts
Not of coëval citizens alone:
It knows no bounds; it has a retroſpect
To ages paſt; it looks on thoſe to come;
And graſps of all the general worth and virtue.
Suppoſe, my ſon, that I to thee had been
A harſh obdurate parent, even unjuſt:
How would the monſtrous thought with horror ſtrike thee,
Of plunging, from revenge, thy raging ſteel
Into her breaſt, who nurs'd thy infant years!——

Cor. Rome is no more! that *Rome* which nurs'd my youth;
That *Rome*, conducted by *Patrician* virtue,
She is no more! My ſword ſhall now chaſtiſe
Theſe ſons of pride and dirt! her upſtart tyrants!
Who have debas'd the nobleſt ſtate on earth
Into a ſordid democratic faction.
Why will my mother join her cauſe to theirs?

Vet. Forbid it, *Jove!* that I ſhould e'er diſtinguiſh
My intereſt from the general cauſe of *Rome*;
Or live to ſee a foreign hoſtile arm
Reform th' abuſes of our land of freedom. [*Pauſing.*]
But 'tis in vain, I find, to reaſon more.

Is

Is there no way to reach thy filial heart,
Once famed as much for piety as courage?
Oft haſt thou juſtly triumph'd, *Coriolanus*;
Now yield one triumph to thy widow'd mother;
And ſend me back amidſt the loud acclaims,
The grateful tranſports of deliver'd *Rome*,
The happieſt far, the moſt renown'd of women!

Cor. Why, why, *Veturia*, wilt thou plead in vain?

Tul. [*aſide to Voluſius.*] See, ſee, *Voluſius*, how the ſtrong emotions
Of powerful nature ſhake his inmoſt ſoul!
See how they tear him.—If he long reſiſts them,
He is a God, or ſomething worſe than man.

Vet. O *Marcius, Marcius!* canſt thou treat me thus?
Canſt thou complain of *Rome*'s ingratitude,
Yet be to me ſo cruelly ungrateful?
To me! who anxious rear'd thy youth to glory?
Whoſe only joy, theſe many years, has been
To boaſt that *Coriolanus* was my ſon?
And doſt thou then renounce me for thy mother?
Spurn me before theſe chiefs, before thoſe ſoldiers,
That weep thy ſtubborn cruelty? Art thou
The hardeſt man to me in this aſſembly?
Look at me! Speak!

[*Pauſing, during which he appears in great agitation.*]

Still doſt thou turn away?
Inexorable? ſilent?—Then, behold me,
Behold thy mother, at whoſe feet thou oft
Haſt kneel'd with fondneſs, kneeling now at thine,
Wetting thy ſtern tribunal with her tears.

Cor. [*raiſes her.*] *Veturia*, riſe. I cannot ſee thee thus.
It is a ſight uncomely, to behold
My mother at my feet, and that to urge

A ſuit,

A ſuit, relentleſs honour muſt refuſe.

Vol. [*advancing.*] Since, *Coriolanus*, thou doſt ſtill retain,
In ſpite of all thy mother now has pleaded,
Thy dreadful purpoſe, ah! how much in vain
Were it for me to join my ſupplications!
The voice of thy *Volumnia*, once ſo pleaſing;
How ſhall it hope to touch the huſband's heart,
When proof againſt the tears of ſuch a parent?
I dare not urge what to thy mother thou
So firmly haſt deny'd—But I muſt weep—
Muſt weep, if not thy harſh ſeverity,
At leaſt thy ſituation. O permit me
[*Taking his hand.*]
To ſhed my guſhing tears upon thy hand!
To preſs it with the cordial lips of love!
And take my laſt farewel!

Cor. Yet, yet, my ſoul,
Be firm, and perſevere———

Vol. Ah *Coriolanus!*
Is then this hand, this hand to me devoted,
The pledge of nuptial love, that has ſo long
Protected, bleſs'd, and ſhelter'd us with kindneſs,
Now lifted up againſt us? Yet I love it,
And, with ſubmiſſive veneration, bow
Beneath th' affliction which it heaps upon us.
But O! what nobler tranſports would it give thee!
What joy beyond expreſſion! couldſt thou once
Surmount the furious ſtorm of fierce revenge,
And yield thee to the charms of love and mercy.
Oh make the glorious trial!

Cor. Mother! wife!
Are all the powers of nature leagu'd againſt me!
I cannot!—will not!—Leave me, my *Volumnia!*

Vol. Well,

Vol. Well, I obey—How bitter thus to part!
Upon ſuch terms to part! perhaps for ever!———
But tell me, ere I hence unroot my feet,
When to my lonely home I ſhall return,
What from their father to our little ſlaves,
Unconſcious of the ſhame to which you doom them,
What ſhall I ſay? [*Pauſing, be highly agitated.*]
Nay, tell me, *Coriolanus!*

Cor. Tell thee! What ſhall I tell thee? See theſe tears!
Theſe tears will tell thee what exceeds the power
Of words to ſpeak, whate'er the' ſon, the huſband,
And father, in one complicated pang,
Can feel—But leave me;—even in pity leave me!
Ceaſe, ceaſe, to torture me, my dear *Volumnia!*
You only tear my heart; but cannot ſhake it:
For by th' immortal Gods, the dread avengers
Of broken faith!———

Vol. [*kneeling.*] Oh ſwear not, *Coriolanus!*
Oh vow not our deſtruction!

Vet. Daughter, riſe.
Let us no more before the *Volſcian* people
Expoſe ourſelves a ſpectacle of ſhame.
It is in vain we try to melt a breaſt,
That to the beſt affections nature gives us,
Prefers the worſt—Hear me, proud man! I have
A heart as ſtout as thine. I came not hither,
To be ſent back rejected, baffled, ſhamed,
Hateful to *Rome*, becauſe I am thy mother:
A *Roman* matron knows, in ſuch extremes,
What part to take—And thus I came provided.
[*Drawing from under her robe a dagger.*]
Go! barbarous ſon! go! double parricide!
Ruſh o'er my corſe to thy belov'd revenge!

Tread

Tread on the bleeding breaſt of her, to whom
Thou ow'ſt thy life!—Lo, thy firſt victim!
Cor. Ha! [*Seizing her hand.*]
What doſt thou mean?
Vet. To die, while *Rome* is free.
To ſeize the moment ere thou art her tyrant.
Cor. O uſe thy power more juſtly! Set not thus
My treacherous heart in arms againſt my reaſon.
Here! here! thy dagger will be well employ'd;
Strike here! and reconcile my fighting duties.
Vet. Off!—Set me free!—Think'ſt thou that graſp, which binds
My feeble hand, can fetter too my will?
No, my proud ſon! thou canſt not make me live,
If *Rome* muſt fall!—No power on earth can do it!
Cor. Pity me, generous *Volſci!*—You are men—
Muſt it then be?—Confuſion!—Do I yield?
What is it? Is it weakneſs? Is it virtue?——
Well!——
Vet. What? Speak!
Cor. O, no!—my ſtifled words refuſe
A paſſage to the throes that wring my heart.
Vet. Nay, if thou yieldeſt, yield like *Coriolanus*;
And what thou doſt, do nobly!
Cor. [*quitting her hand.*] There!—'Tis done!—
Thine is the triumph, nature!
[*To* Veturia *in a low tone of voice.*] Ah, *Veturia!*
Rome by thy aid is ſav'd—but thy ſon loſt.
Vet. He never can be loſt, who ſaves his country.
Cor. [*turning to the* Roman *ladies.*] Ye matrons, guardians of the *Roman* ſafety,
You to the ſenate may report this anſwer.
We grant the truce you aſk. But on theſe terms:
That *Rome*, mean-time, ſhall to a peace agree,
Fair,

Fair, equal, juſt, and ſuch as may ſecure
The ſafety, rights, and honour of the *Volſci*.
[*To the troops.*]
Volſci, we raiſe the ſiege. Go, and prepare,
By the firſt dawn, for your return to *Antium*.
[*As the troops retire, and* Coriolanus *turns to the* Roman *ladies*;]
Tul. [*to* Voluſius *aſide.*] 'Tis as we wiſh'd, *Voluſius*—To your ſtation.
But mark me well—Till thou ſhalt hear my call,
I charge thee not to ſtir. One offer more
My honour bids me make to this proud man,
Before we ſtrike the blow—If he rejects it,
His blood be on his head.
Vol. Well! I obey you. [*He goes out.*]
Cor. Be it thy care, *Galeſus*, that a ſafeguard
Attend theſe noble matrons back to *Rome*.

SCENE II.

CORIOLANUS, TULLUS.

Cor. I plainly, *Tullus*, by your looks diſcern
You diſapprove my conduct.
Tul. Caius Marcius,
I mean not to aſſail thee with the clamour
Of loud reproaches, and the war of words;
But, pride apart, and all that can pervert
The light of ſteady reaſon, here to make
A candid fair propoſal.
Cor. Speak. I hear thee.
Tul. I need not tell thee, that I have perform'd
My utmoſt promiſe. Thou haſt been protected;
Haſt had thy ampleſt, moſt ambitious wiſh:
Thy wounded pride is heal'd, thy dear revenge
Compleatly

Compleatly ſated; and to crown thy fortune,
At the ſame time thy peace with *Rome* reſtor'd.
Thou art no more a *Volſcian*, but a *Roman*.
Return, return; thy duty calls upon thee
Still to protect the city thou haſt ſaved:
It ſtill may be in danger from our arms.

Cor. Inſolent man. Is this thy fair propoſal?

Tul. Be patient—Hear me ſpeak—I have already
From *Rome* protected thee; now from the *Volſci*,
From their juſt vengeance, I will ſtill protect thee.
Retire. I will take care thou mayſt with ſafety.

Cor. With ſafety!—Heavens!—And think'ſt thou,
Coriolanus
Will ſtoop to thee for ſafety? No! my ſafeguard
Is in myſelf, a boſom void of blame,
And the great Gods, protectors of the juſt.—
O 'tis an act of cowardice and baſeneſs,
To ſeize the very time my hands were fetter'd,
By the ſtrong chain of former obligations,
The ſafe, ſure moment to inſult me!—Gods!
Were I now free, as on that day I was,
When at *Corioli* I tamed thy pride,
This had not been.

Tul. Thou ſpeak'ſt the truth: it had not.
O for that time again! Propitious Gods,
If you will bleſs me, grant it!—Know, for that,
For that dear purpoſe, I have now propos'd
Thou ſhouldſt return. I pray thee, *Marcius*, do it!
And we ſhall meet again on nobler terms.

Cor. When to the *Volſci* I have clear'd my faith,
Doubt not I ſhall find means to meet thee nobly.
We then our generous quarrel may decide
In the bright front of ſome embattled field,
And not in private brawls, like fierce barbarians.

Tul. Thou

Tul. Thou canſt not hope acquittal from the *Volſci.*—
Cor. I do:—Nay more, expect their approbation,
Their thanks! I will obtain them ſuch a peace
As thou durſt never aſk; a perfect union
Of their whole nation with imperial *Rome*
In all her privileges, all her rights.
By the juſt Gods, I will! What wouldſt thou more?
Tul. What would I more! proud *Roman?* This I would;
Fire the curſt foreſt where theſe *Roman* wolves
Haunt and infeſt their nobler neighbours round them:
Extirpate from the boſom of this land
A falſe perfidious people, who, beneath
The maſque of freedom, are a combination
Againſt the liberty of human-kind,
The genuine ſeed of outlaws and of robbers.
Cor. The ſeed of Gods!—'Tis not for thee, vain boaſter!
'Tis not for ſuch as thou, ſo often ſpared
By her victorious ſword, to talk of *Rome,*
But with reſpect and awful veneration.
Whate'er her blots, whate'er her giddy factions,
There is more virtue in one ſingle year
Of *Roman* ſtory, than your *Volſcian* annals
Can boaſt thro' all your creeping dark duration!
Tul. I thank thy rage. This full diſplays the traitor.
Cor. Ha! traitor!
Tul. Firſt, to thy own country, traitor!
And traitor, now, to mine!
Cor. Ye heavenly powers!
I ſhall break looſe—My rage—But let us part——
Leſt my raſh hand ſhould do a haſty deed
My cooler thought forbids.
Tul. Begone—Return——

To

To head the *Roman* troops. I grant the quittance
Full and complete of all thoſe obligations
Thou haſt ſo oft inſultingly complain'd
Fetter'd thy hands. They now are free. I court
The worſt thy ſword can do; whilſt thou from me
Haſt nothing to expect, but ſure deſtruction.
Quit then this hoſtile camp. Once more I tell thee,
Thou art not here one ſingle hour in ſafety.

Cor. Think'ſt thou to fright me hence?

Tul. Thou wilt not then?
Thou wilt not take the ſafety which I offer?

Cor. Till I have clear'd my honour in your council,
And proved before them all, to thy confuſion,
The falſhood of thy charge; as ſoon in battle
I would before thee fly, and howl for mercy,
As quit the ſtation they have here aſſign'd me.

Tul. Voluſius! Hoa!

SCENE III.

To them VOLUSIUS, *and conſpirators, with their ſwords drawn.*

Tul. Seize and ſecure the traitor!

Cor. [*Laying his hand upon his ſword.*] Who dares approach me, dies!

Vol. Die thou!

[*As* Coriolanus *draws his ſword,* Voluſius *and the conſpirators ruſh upon and ſtab him.* Tullus *ſtanding by, without having drawn his ſword.*]

Cor. [*Endeavouring to free himſelf.*] Off!—Villains!
[*Falling.*] O murdering ſlaves! Aſſaſſinating cowards!
Dies.]

SCENE

SCENE IV.

[*Upon the noiſe of the tumult, enter haſtily to them* Galeſus, *the other deputies of the* Volſcian *ſtates, officers, friends of* Coriolanus, *and* Titus *with a large band of ſoldiers.*]

Gal. [*as he enters.*] Are we a nation ruled by laws, or fury?
How! whence this tumult?——— [*Pauſing.*]
Gods! what do I ſee?
The noble *Marcius* ſlain!
Tul. You ſee a traitor
Puniſh'd as he deſerv'd, the *Roman* yoke
That thrall'd us broken, and the *Volſci* free!
Gal. Hear me, great *Jove!* Hear, all you injur'd powers
Of friendſhip, hoſpitality and faith!
By that heroic blood, which from the ground
Reeking to you for vengeance cries, I ſwear!
This impious breach of your eternal laws,
This daring outrage on the *Volſcian* honour,
Shall find in me a rigorous avenger!
On the ſame earth, polluted by their crime,
I will not live with theſe unpuniſh'd ruffians!
Tul. This deed is mine: I claim it all!—Theſe men,
Theſe valiant men, were but my inſtruments,
To puniſh him who to our face betray'd us.
We ſhall not fear to anſwer to the *Volſci*,
In a full council of the ſtates at *Antium*,
The glorious charge of having ſtabb'd their traitor!
Gal. Titus, till then ſecure them.
[Tullus *and conſpirators are led off.*]
[Galeſus,

[Galeſus, *ſtanding over the body of* Coriolanus, *after a ſhort pauſe, proceeds.*]

Volſcian fathers,
And ye, brave ſoldiers, ſee an awful ſcene,
Demanding ſerious, ſolemn meditation.
This man was once the glory of his age,
Diſintereſted, juſt, with every virtue
Of civil life adorn'd, in arms unequall'd.
His only blot was this; that, much provoked,
He rais'd his vengeful arm againſt his country.
And, lo! the righteous Gods have now chaſtis'd him,
Even by the hands of thoſe for whom he fought.

Whatever private views and paſſions plead,
No cauſe can juſtify ſo black a deed:
Theſe, when the angry tempeſt clouds the ſoul,
May darken reaſon, and her courſe controul;
But when the proſpect clears, her ſtartled eye
Muſt from the treacherous gulph with horror fly,
On whoſe wild wave, by ſtormy paſſions toſt,
So many hapleſs wretches have been loſt.
Then be this truth the ſtar by which we ſteer,
Above ourſelves *our* COUNTRY *ſhould be dear.*

END *of the* FIFTH ACT.

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs. WOFFINGTON.

WELL! Gentlemen! and are you ſtill ſo vain
To treat our ſex with arrogant diſdain;
And think, to you alone by partial Heaven
Superior ſenſe and ſovereign power are given,
When in the ſtory told to-night, you find,
With what a boundleſs ſway we rule the mind,
And by a few ſoft words of ours, with eaſe,
Can turn the proudeſt hearts juſt where we pleaſe?
If an old mother had ſuch powerful charms,
To ſtop a ſtubborn Roman's *conquering arms,—*
Soldiers and ſtateſmen of theſe days, with you,
What think you would a fair young miſtreſs do?
If with my grave diſcourſe and wrinkled face,
I thus could bring a hero to diſgrace,
How abſolutely may I hope to reign
Now I am turn'd to my own ſhape again!
However, I will uſe my empire well;
And, if I have a certain magic ſpell
Or in my tongue, or wit, or ſhape, or eyes,
Which can ſubdue the ſtrong, and fool the wiſe,
Be not alarm'd: I will not interfere
In ſtate-affairs, nor undertake to ſteer
The helm of government,—as we are told
Theſe female politicians did of old:
Such dangerous heights I never wiſh'd to climb—
Thank heav'n I better can employ my time———

Aſk

Aſk you to what my power I ſhall apply?
To make my ſubjects bleſt, is my reply.
My purpoſes are gracious all, and kind.
Some may be told---and ſome may be divin'd:
One, which at preſent I have moſt at heart,
To you without reſerve I will impart:
It is my ſovereign will,—Hear and obey,—
That you with candor treat this Orphan Play.

End of the SECOND VOLUME.